



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

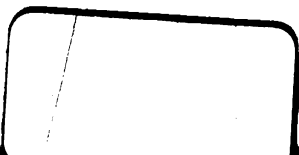
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



600009980W



In 2 vols.

Vol. 3 only in Acad.



PRACTICAL SERMONS

ON

THE CHARACTERS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

BY THE
REV. EDWARD MONRO, M.A.,
PERPETUAL CURATE OF HARROW WEALD.

VOL. III.



LONDON:
JOSEPH MASTERS, ALDERSGATE STREET,
AND NEW BOND STREET.
MDCCCLVIII.

1060 . 5 . 4 .

LONDON :
JOSEPH MASTERS AND CO., PRINTERS,
ALDERSGATE STREET.

CONTENTS.

SERM.	PAGE
LVI. DAVID. (Part IV.) Courage, an Attribute of Holy Youth. (1 Sam. xvii. 54.) . . .	1
LVII. JONATHAN. Friendship, a Circumstance of Holy Youth. (1 Sam. xviii. 1.) . . .	19
LVIII. SAMUEL. (Part II.) Keeping Self, an Attribute of Holy Youth.—Samuel in the Temple. (1 Sam. iii. 1.) . . .	37
LIX. SOLOMON. (Part III.) Wisdom, an Attribute of the Religious Youth. (1 Kings iii. 9.)	49
LX. SOLOMON. (Part IV.) The Birthright of Truth. (Prov. xxiii. 23.) . . .	65
LXI. JEHOSEPHAT. Prosperity. (2 Chron. xx. 30.)	97
LXII. UZZIAH. Familiarity with Religious Things. (2 Kings xv. 5.) . . .	117
LXIII. DEBORAH. Woman's Attribute. (Judges iv. 4.)	127
LXIV. JEROBOAM. The Church Sacrificed to the World. (1 Kings xiii. 33, 34.) . . .	139
LXV. RUTH. Duties to Elders in Families. (Ruth i. 16.) . . .	159
LXVI. NEHEMIAH. Simplicity and Power. (Neh. xiii. 31.) . . .	179

SERM.	PAGE
LXVII. NAAMAN. Compromise. (2 Kings v. 1.) .	195
LXVIII. AMOS. The Refining Power of Religion. (Amos i. 1.)	209
LXIX. NEBUCHADNEZZAR. Pride. (Dan. iv. 37.)	225
LXX. ESTHER. The Church in Captivity. (Esther iv. 14.)	245
LXXI. ELIJAH. (Part II.) The Duty of Fasting. (1 Kings xix. 8.)	261
LXXII. REBEKAH. Undue Natural Affection and Partiality in Parents. (Gen. xxv. 28.) .	275
LXXIII. DELILAH. False Affection. (Prov. xii. 4.) .	289
LXXIV. TOBIT. The Combination of Feeling and the Sense of Duty. (S. Matt. x. 16.) .	317
LXXV. BEZALEEL and AHOLIAB. Art the Hand- maid of Religion. (Exodus xxxvi. 1.) .	337
LXXVI. The Song of Solomon. JESUS Seen in the Old Testament. (Canticles i. 1.) .	355
LXXVII. ELIHU. Credulous and Incredulous Minds. (Job xxxii. 2.)	377
LXXVIII. The Prophet and the Priest. Elasticity in the Church. (Psalm cxlvii. 2.)	401
LXXIX. The Men of Nineveh and the Men of England. National Sins and National Repentance. (S. Luke xi. 32.)	429
LXXX. BALAAM and SAUL. Consistent Wickedness and Inconsistent Profession. (Mal. iii. 18.)	449
LXXXI. JEROBOAM, SAUL, and AHAB. Shades of Sin. (Mal. iii. 18.)	467
LXXXII. Faith and Feeling. (Isa. xli. 8.)	481

LVI.

DAVID.—PART IV.

COURAGE, AN ATTRIBUTE OF HOLY YOUTH.

1 SAM. XVII. 54.

“AND DAVID TOOK THE HEAD OF THE PHILISTINE, AND BROUGHT IT TO JERUSALEM; BUT HE PUT HIS ARMOUR IN HIS TENT.”

1. MANY religious people, it is to be feared, are in the habit of thinking that courage and good personal bearing are not necessarily parts of religion; while very many, on the other hand, have so praised these attributes, as to impress us with the idea that they consider that the whole of a boy's religion consists in being bold and free. Both of these are mistakes, and nearly equally so. They are shown to be so in one and the selfsame story in Holy Scripture,—that of Samuel's choice of David when he anointed him for the kingdom. The whole

history of this transaction bears out the lesson which I have suggested.

A king, remarkable for physical power and manliness of form combined with great intelligence, had just shown to the world that none of these qualities of themselves will make a man good or holy.

Saul, the son of Kish, a head and shoulders taller than any one in Israel, and pre-eminent for intellectual powers over the people he governed, had signally disobeyed God, and brought down a scandal on the profession of religion. We must remember that Saul shone in these very attributes which the world calls great. After such a failure in the case of the son of Kish we should have expected that God would have guided His people to choose one remarkable for no natural advantage, in order to show them that spiritual gifts only could adorn the servant of the Most High ; and still more, that Samuel, the prophet, who had mourned so grievously for Saul, would have shrunk from making natural advantages the standard of a second choice. The reverse, however, is the case. Samuel, guided by God, went to Bethlehem, to choose one of the sons of Jesse. Struck with the remarkable appearance and

gallant bearing of Eliab and Shammah, he at once thought that the accepted of God stood before him. But he was mistaken : and when David, the shepherd-boy, the youngest of the family entered, he was directed to select and anoint him. It is significant that after all David is especially mentioned as healthful and beautiful, brave and courageous, full of enterprise, and a laudable ambition, longing for battle, and loving scenes of danger. Thus in the choice of David there was no great departure from the standard adopted in the case of Saul.

On the other hand, he was the son of a lowly inhabitant of a small village in Judea, the youngest son, and occupied in the humbler occupations of life, guarding a few sheep in the wilderness. With his leathern sling at his waist, and his shepherd's staff in his hand, David presented no very striking appearance to the world's eye ; but we are told that the Spirit of God was in him ; so that in these respects there was a great departure from the type of his predecessor. As, however, I wish to prove that the exercise of manly and noble qualities is not only consistent with, but actually an ornament of, religion, I will proceed to show how strikingly these characteristics may

be traced in the case of David. It is an honour to youths that they respect so highly those manly and unselfish qualities which adorn the nobler walks among mankind. Such must naturally admire a character like David's, and ought to feel that it would be their highest condition to copy it in all its parts.

2. Having gone down to the battle to carry cheese to his brethren, he at once showed the most unflinching courage. He accepted the challenge of the giant, and, without a moment's consideration entered on a combat which is without its parallel in the history of man. Having accomplished this feat, he became a son-in-law to the king, and a subject of song to the women of Israel.

The characteristics of David in his boyhood were but types of his long after life. A man is known by his friends, and David's friends were warriors and great men of the earth. He mourned over Abner, he consulted with Joab, and dwelt with Barzillai. No one that was mean or ungenerous was numbered among his companions ; and if his friends showed the high-mindedness of the king, his actions did so still more. His patient endurance appeared in his long wanderings in the desert of En-

gedi ; his personal courage in many a battle in which he caused his name to be feared and respected ; his boundless generosity, when, unwilling to slake his own thirst if his comrades could not do the same, he poured out the water brought from the well of Bethlehem ; and above all, his generous and noble desire to forgive rather than to avenge, in sparing Saul, and weeping for Absalom. Such was the summary of this great man's character, showing that in selecting him, God did not pass by the nobler human attributes, although the natural powers of Saul had been so signally abused. But on the other hand, we must remember, what I have already mentioned, the strong mark which Samuel placed at the very outset upon the circumstance of David's being the youngest son, least important in point of office, and brought in from the wilderness to receive his high and glorious mission ; so that while with his voice Samuel denounced the glories of this world for their own sake, he with his hand anointed one who was in no small degree adorned with them.

3. Nor is David's case by any means singular in Holy Scripture. We find, in fact, in many instances, that the names of those who served

God might be recorded among the warriors and heroes of the earth. Abraham went forth to victory in the early patriarchal days of the world; Josiah, the youthful king, perished on the battle-field of Megiddo. One of the leading features of S. Paul is masculine courage; and the centurions of the Cross and of the Italian band were among the earliest converts to Christianity. God has by no means rejected from His kingdom those who at the same time adorned the walks of the kingdom of this world, and He has given no countenance to those who would connect religion with imbecility, and the service of Heaven with the neglected duties of earth.

But while this is the case, we have, of course, to reconcile the fact with those strong statements made in Holy Scripture, which tell us that God has not chosen the great of this world, and which would, at first sight, tend to throw discredit on the lustre of this world's appointments. The two lines are perfectly consistent. It is not that God would exclude from His spiritual kingdom what is beautiful in the natural, but that He would use them for a different object, and in a different manner. He would, as it were, reset the jewels

which have been set in earthly diadems, and bid their radiance gleam from a heavenly crown. Scripture, in fact, does not condemn these particular qualities, but constantly warns us against their abuse. It would bid us fear using them for their own sake, and direct us to a further aim in their exercise.

Every holy warrior of Scripture especially laboured for the furtherance of God's kingdom and of right. Abraham sought to rescue the captive unjustly taken; David, to crush the heathen, and extend the limits of the Church of God. None retained their arms for their own sake, but all laid them down when their work was ended, and their design accomplished.

4. And now to turn these types and models to the practical conduct of life. I need hardly remind you, (before I bring home the direct practical rule to be borrowed from these reflections,) of the long array of those who from time to time, through the various ages of mankind, have imitated these high models, and adorned Christianity by the greatness of their personal courage. Such were hosts of the martyrs of early ages: the boy who bit out his tongue rather than yield to the fas-

cination of lust ; and the soldier of our own country who showed an even nobler gallantry before the executioner than he had in the battle-field, who won for his high title that of the British proto-martyr, and for his mausoleum one of our noblest abbeys. There, too, is the first martyr of the Catholic Church, the weapons of whose warfare were those of eloquence and learning ; nevertheless they won him as high a title as the sword or the shield of the soldier.

The thundering legion of a Roman Emperor numbered in its ranks the baptized of the army ; and Ambrose, the veteran soldier, laid aside the helmet for the mitre of Milan and the crown of suffering. The Spanish soldier, revered on all sides for his personal valour, leaving the ranks of the army of Spain, founded an order in the Church. And what fills the mind with more swelling emotion than the tale of the youth who, resigning a crown for the cloister, rendered the name of Aloysius so celebrated among men ? Louis, the descendant of Philip Augustus of France, and that other Louis, justly revered and embalmed in the historic recollections of Hungary, have redeemed that regal name from the ignominy to which too

many of its possessors have consigned it. And not to be forgotten in that band of heroes are many of those who, with a pure love for the Church, and a sincere devotion to the religious idea of loyalty, fought and fell around the unfortunate Charles Stuart. Nor has the band lessened as it has approached our own day, when we recollect Malesherbes who died for his king, and Gardiner who perished at Culloden.

The reflections caused by such a line, as they pass in succession before us, are in themselves almost sufficient practical suggestions to stir us up to the practical duties connected with the subject before us ; but I will reduce them to more definite shape and outline.

a. And, first, the selection of David was necessitated by the rejection of Saul ; and yet Saul possessed all that was needful to form a hero of this world. This at once strikes a line between two classes of heroes, and shows that one, having been weighed in the balance, is found wanting. With how many schoolboys is this true ! Among their companions they pride themselves on the qualities of generosity and independence, and yet they may for all that be amongst the vilest of

God's creation—to be rejected at last, and to be supplanted, not by those who fail in the traits which we admire ; but who, adorned with them, will inherit the fame that they have lost.

Many youths possess power, intelligence, generosity, and courage. These are highly esteemed. We have often to feel that many of those who have served God have too much underrated these virtues, and that the irreligious have found more favour with them than those who have been religious. We may have occasionally yielded ourselves to the strong desire of the moment. Others form an over-estimate of those powers and gifts, and that from an impression that those who exercise them are excluded from the possibility of a religious life.

The boy who, possessed of natural courage, fights for the mere purpose of injuring another, or maintaining a fraud ; the youth who, however high in birth or station, however soaring in family pride, destroys the property of his poorer neighbour, upon the pretence of supporting caste ; he who deals with the acts of Christianity as if they were the unreality of a dream with the knee unbent in prayer and the

lip unmoved to the Creed ; or those who, in high position in the school, ever lend their influence to discourage earnestness, never to protect self-denial ; these will inevitably find one day that, like Saul, they will be deposed from their station, and another, gifted with the same powers though directed to a nobler aim, chosen in their stead. It may be asked how. In the very school where they have exercised their power wrongly, they may stand degraded. They may lose by some stroke of retributive providence the hard-wrought aim in the prize or examination, and, sinking suddenly in the scale of intellectual eminence, be left with no nobler excellence than the unjust exercise of mere brute force ; or having won their pathway to school-captaincy by the exercise of degrading principles, may only go to the University, or to the public office, to be despised, trampled on, and passed by. In such ways God may by the exercise of His Providence actually depose those who have misused their influence and superiority ; and their place will be taken in the strife of after life by those who, having been crushed by them, may yet not be deficient in any one of the powers of which they boasted.

David, in all things, took the place of Saul : if the triumphant Pæans of the multitude delighted the ear of the son of Kish, ten times more attended the entrance of the young conqueror into the Holy City. If Saul was a man of war, and all the people followed him trembling, the feats of David's arms were so brilliant, that he was termed the "light of Israel," and was checked in his desire to be in the front of battle by the universal intreaty of the army. If Saul ambitiously desired to reign over a nation, David ruled that nation from Dan to Beersheba, and founded the dynasty which Saul had lost. If Saul desired to leave the name of a hero written on his tomb, or the fame of military glory to after ages, David's fame has outlived that of his predecessor, as the deathless laurel outlives the flower of the fields. In each respect David succeeded Saul, and stepped into the place left vacant by the dethroned monarch.

b. But, secondly, I may remark, that the youth whom God chose to be king, was endowed with personal beauty and personal courage. Do not imagine that religion will excuse us from the exercise of the latter, or that we may denounce the service of God as ener-

vating and effeminate! If we devote ourselves to His service at Confirmation, at Holy Communion, at the earnest prayer, at the deep resolution,—remember, it will be as much incumbent on us to serve Him by the devotion of personal courage to His service, as by any other of those acts which are more popularly and immediately termed religious. It is our *duty* to protect from personal injury those who are wishing to do right; to shield from tyranny and violence those who, coming from home, strive to continue the habits of their early childhood. It is our duty not to discredit the cause of God by cowardice, whether physical or moral, to be ashamed or evasive; boldly to defend the cause of our Heavenly Master, and to shrink from nothing so much as being ashamed of CHRIST. In fact the schoolboy has as great a claim upon him to manifest his religion through the exercise of those acts of personal courage, as he has through the more direct performance of religious ministration, which, too often like the seeds striking down through their upper soil, reaches at last the substratum of rock, and withers away.

The subject matter of religion with youths

consists of these very acts, around which personal courage coils. *Φιλοσοφοῦμεν ἄνευ μαλακίας*, was the celebrated saying put into the lips of the great Athenian nation when they would indignantly reject the idea that philosophy enervated, or that the devotion of the soul to its high vocation rendered unpractical the energies of the mind.

c. But at the same time the sacred story gives us a great check with respect to the use of our nobler natural qualities. They are gifts in themselves, great and to be consecrated in the cause of religion, but, in themselves, they belong to a fallen nature and need great limitations. Their earthly part must be taken away. Those points in which men are most inclined to pride themselves must be held in continual abeyance. David was the youngest of the sons of Jesse; his profession honourable but lowly; his antecedent acts of heroism were against the beasts of the forest instead of against the warrior and the hero; he was sent as a messenger to the camp—the bearer of the cheeses and the loaves, unadorned with the shield or the sword. The weapons of his first victory over man were the sling of the shepherd, and the five pebbles of the brook. None of the ordinary accompani-

ments and trappings of worldly precedence were his ; he neither possessed nor boasted of them. As if God had declared by the example of David, that while courage and fearlessness in the cause of truth were still remaining unbroken columns in the temple that had been ruined by the fall ; nevertheless they were to be wreathed with no ornament of the world, and decorated by no trophy of human vanity. In this respect the example of David reads us a high lesson.

It is too often the case that youths are more likely to be dazzled by the trappings of the moral quality ; with the trophy rather than with the armour of the living warrior. The courage which could defend a flock in the wilderness, or fight with five pebbles and a sling, is often an unlovely attribute among boys. The splendour of primogeniture, height, and bearing, the prestige of an ancestral past, the furnish of the iron and the steel ; the gratulations of the world ; the conformity to the conventional codes of honour—these are the trappings hung up around the form of courage, with which many a youth dazzled turns away his glance from the solid structure beneath, and underrates the moral quality, because it is decked

with no wreath of worldly glory. Take care of this, it is the crying sin of schools ! It is the pure moral power consecrated to God, which God loves and which ennobles man ; all the rest are but the gewgaws of a moment, the brief and transitory tinsel of a vain world. Warriors and soldiers have loved the accident too well, often at the expense of the essence. David went out in Saul's armour, but he fainted beneath the load ; he went out with the sling and the stone, but he slew the Philistine and won imperishable fame. In proportion as he decked himself in the human part of the soldier, and trusted to it, he failed ; when he placed that aside and trusted to the Divine aid alone he succeeded. I do not say, that we must discard those accidents, but we must not too much trust to or overrate them.

David's case is, of course, an exceptional one ; but it is an allegory. How often are schoolboys tempted to fall into the error that I have been warning against ! How often a boy thinks himself courageous because he plumes himself with the feathery accidents of courage ! But mark me ; they will all dissolve to dust like the atoms of the shell of a chrysalis, while he who possesses the immortal

power around which they are coiled, will spread the wings of his incorruptible power in proportion as he is disenthralled from its external appendages ; and rising from these lower scenes, will ascend, renewing his strength like the eagle's, to the other world. He will assume that glorified position for which this was but a probation ; while he who has nothing but the appendage will crumble beneath the shocks of life, and find nothingness within his shell. Saul with his boasted stature, his proud reserve, his haughty dependence upon the human heart of greatness, quailed before the giant, and saw the armour in which he trusted cast useless on the field. He sunk at last on the heap of the slain, and left behind him neither lineage nor dynasty. But he who trusted only to the arm of God slew the giant before whom the monarch trembled, and founded a line of kings whose imperishable name is recorded in heaven in the hymn of those who sing the praise of the Son of David " who reigneth for ever and ever."



LVII.

JONATHAN.

FRIENDSHIP, A CIRCUMSTANCE OF HOLY YOUTH.

1 SAM. XVIII. 1.

“AND IT CAME TO PASS, WHEN HE HAD MADE AN END OF SPEAKING UNTO SAUL, THAT THE SOUL OF JONATHAN WAS KNIT WITH THE SOUL OF DAVID, AND JONATHAN LOVED HIM AS HIS OWN SOUL.”

1. THERE have been certain proverbial friendships stereotyped on the social history of the world; those of Pylades and Orestes, Nisus and Euryalus, Jonathan and David. Certain similar features marked them all: they were in all cases the friendships of youth, of self-sacrifice, of heroic generosity and of perseverance to death. Another feature distinguished them. The friendship was in each case vowed upon the altar of boyish devotion. The boy did

not mistake the character of his own disposition or the friend whom he selected ; and the experience of after life confirmed and verified the choice of youth.

There are many occasions in life in which the boy is not the best decider upon truth, and in which the decisions of early days and first choices are not confirmed by the experience of riper years. It is happily not the case with friendship. There, often, he whom we have chosen as the depository of our first conscious feelings, the sympathizer with our sufferings, which reserve forbids our even betraying to a mother ; the chosen companion of the long walk on the school-holiday ; the friend to whom we have applied in the difficulty of the lesson ; is the companion of the sore struggles of after days, the accepted friend of the wife of our choice, the sponsor of our children, and sometimes our kind and tender comforter when we are mourners over the grave of the wife or of the child. In the advance of onward years, the friend of boyhood sits by us when we are dying, follows us to the grave, places the tablet in the church or the inscription on the tombstone, and is steadfast at the last hour, as he was in the schoolroom, by the

river's bank, on the play-ground and on the holiday.

" 'Tis little, but it looks in truth,
 As if the quiet bones were blest
 Among familiar names to rest,
 And in the places of his youth ;
 Ah, yet, e'en yet, if thus might be,
 I falling on his faithful heart
 Would, breathing through his lips, impart,
 The life that almost dies in me."

Those to whom I speak may be in that happy time of life ; they have the opportunities of friendship, opportunities, alas ! too sadly wasted and misused by tens of thousands, but capable of being amongst the brightest and the most glorious recollections of our life !

2. I will take the case of David's love for Jonathan to enforce those admirable lessons which may be borrowed for the conduct of friendship amongst boys at school, remembering all the time that that friendship has been consecrated by being recorded in God's holy Word ; and that in the love of David is seen in allegory the Love of the Son of David, Who died for us, yielding up His life for a world that lay in wickedness, yet out of which He redeemed His Church, as the Son of Jesse selected from the stem of Saul the object of his most devoted affection.

The love of David and Jonathan was singularly beautiful and true. It existed under all circumstances of their respective lives, and in proportion as, according to the world's way of judging, Jonathan loved and protected David when the latter was in the deepest adversity, David threw his sheltering arm around Jonathan and his family in a day when he in turn was dependant on the son of Jesse.

The lessons that are to be gathered for our conduct from the contemplation of these two, are, first, the recognition of friendship at all as in itself a holy thing.

a. All boys have a natural tendency towards forming friendships. Such friendships tend to bring out the character; without them the powers of a boy will very often lie dormant and undeveloped through his future life. There are properties of the soul which will not appear until elicited by some such course as this. Up to a certain age a youth, though full of affections towards those who are the relations of his life, may be unconscious of them. For his friend at school, in connection with whom none of those relationships exist, he is able to realize love and regard, and in connection with him first becomes conscious of the power of

love at all. The knowledge of this fact alone expands and invigorates the whole disposition.

b. Then, too, the friendship of youth frequently ends in important results of usefulness in after life. There is no telling in what positions we may be placed in which the covenanted friend of our boyhood may stand us in stead. There may, in fact, be scenes and sorrows in which every affection but that will fail us. There is a sense of honour mixed up with that relationship, which is not so essential an element to other ties of life ; and that honour is a cementing union, without which many of the materials of regard and affection would start asunder.

There is something striking in the altered circumstances which in turn affected the sons of Kish and Jesse ; and it was in these very adversities that each was so invaluable to the other. When Saul threatened the life of David, Jonathan was indefatigable to save him. He ran the risk of his father's extreme anger, and of his own loss of the crown and throne of Israel ; but those considerations were nothing to him compared with the life and preservation of his friend. And so in his turn when David became powerful, when on Mount Gilboa Jonathan had been killed by the side

of his gallant father, Mephibosheth, the child of Jonathan, was daily and almost hourly the solicitude of David. It is very hard to tell what our lot may be in future life. Vicissitudes, as untoward as that which lost Jonathan his throne, may affect us in our onward career ; and fortune, as unexpected as that which fell to David's lot, may fall to our share. Many a boy is flushed with high birth or illustrious parentage, or has some bright promise of future position, which will elevate him above his fellows ; but the possibility of a future change in the position of boyhood is strongly brought to mind by the story of Jonathan and David. Princes have, in mimic government, tyrannized over the lowly-born in boyhood, when in after life, the lowly-born has worn a crown, and the prince been an adventurer in the ranks ; the child of the noble has affected to scorn the son of the burghess, when in after life the expatriated noble has lived on the boon of the princely merchant.

In days gone by how full schools must have been of the germs of such vicissitudes ! Imagine a boys' school in Paris five years before the outbreak of the reign of terror, or in other cities of Europe before other convulsions,

which as radically affected the condition of society. And who can tell when looking round any school, what may be the changes of future lots? The early and unexpected death of a father on whose life alone hang high position, and lofty expectation, may leave many helpless orphans to battle with the struggles of an uncheered life; the column, which now with so fair a shaft and so elaborated a capital promises to bear up a home of no ordinary ambition for future life, may be left, and round its shattered shaft may gather the orphan, the friendless, the ruined. An unexpected crash in the mercantile speculation in which wealth may be embarked, from which you now draw such uncompromising expectation, may leave you a beggar, and your companion a prince. Some sudden fall, owing to a now utterly unexpected cause, from the paths of morality, integrity, or honour, may leave you to track your dreary way through the speechless circles of a severe society, and leave you, with all your expectations of the future, immeasurably below him who, at this moment, without an expectation, has in him the germ of an uncompromising principle. Your own premature death; your "sun going down while it is yet day" may bring you to a

position of weakness ; and the last hour may teach you to lean upon those whom now you start from, and to regret the angry word and contemptuous feeling with which you are sometimes now inclined to accost your companion. Death is a great leveller. Yes ! The mere fact of schoolboy days being the treasury of future life is in itself a sufficient reason for considering the example of David and Jonathan. The friendship we form, the friends we choose along the onward pathway of this working world, are often shallow, changeful and alterable by circumstances in a way in which the old schoolfellow is not, who knew us when our faults and virtues were in the germ, who has learnt to look lightly on our failings, smiling where the world would frown, excusing where men in the great stir of society are suspicious and ready to accuse. The old friend still views us with the frankness and generosity of the boy, and refuses with a still boyish sense of honour to sit in the throne of judgment upon our faults or upon our foibles.

Under this head there is something very magnificent about the end of Jonathan. Noble-minded and obedient as a soldier and a son, he

marched forth in that last dark battle array, which was to quail so ingloriously on Mount Gilboa. It was very long since we had heard of Jonathan; scarcely since those farewell words of youthful love, when Jonathan said to David, "The LORD be between me and thee, between my seed and thy seed for ever." And we hear of him no more. He withdraws from the scene of action. Saul proclaims open war with David; and the friend must not violate the duty of the son. At length the troops marshal themselves under the melancholy bodings of the king on the slopes of Mount Gilboa; and "the Philistines slew Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchishua, Saul's sons; and when they came to strip the slain, they found Saul and his three sons fallen in Mount Gilboa;" so the curtain drops upon his history.

David heard of his death; he died in arms against his cause, and loud was the lament he uttered over the premature end of his friend. "The beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places; how are the mighty fallen! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Ascalon. Ye mountains of Gilboa! let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor field of offering." How are the mighty fallen in the

midst of the battle ! “ Jonathan was slain, I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan ; very pleasant hast thou been to me ; thy love to me was wonderful—passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen ! ”

* What lament can be more beautiful than this,—the cry of a noble and generous heart over one who, having fallen in a hostile cause, was nevertheless his friend ? The events of after life may place you who have formed your friendship in schoolboy-days on opposite sides to each other. The arena of political discussion ; the house of commons or the house of lords ; the hustings or the canvass ; the necessary competition in the mart or in the exchange, in the vessel laden with merchandise which traverses the deep, in the scheme for the patent ; the improvement of manufacture or the working of the mill ; the rivalry of family feud ; the hereditary dissension or the ancestral jealousy, may cast their shadows over your personal intercourse, and throw the concord of boyhood into the rivalry of manhood. The marriage may cast up a middle wall of partition between the husbands who once were friends. It is within the range of possibility that even the battle array, the strife of nations and the

contradictory calls of military duty may separate the friends of school, and find them on different grounds in the battle of life. All this may happen to you and call forth from you the expression of the same forgiveness and forbearance that David showed to Jonathan.

It would be on such occasions that real Christian friendship will be truly felt, and that the love of early years will be tested in the trials of coming life. It will be in scenes like these that you will have to show whether the covenant of schoolboy-days, made in a warm heart with the earnestness of youthful love, can really hold out when it can be practically useful.

But more even than this, the day may come, when in the infirmity of human nature, the personal quarrel may have created a chasm in the continuity of friendship. When the strife, which has begun like a spark, may continue to extend itself to the flames of more widespread quarrel, fanned by the fuel of daily circumstance. Even then the school-boy may recollect his early covenant, and, as on Mount Gilboa, may have the opportunity at the hour of death of forgetting everything but the affection of a simpler day, and extending the hand of forgiveness to heal and bind up the

wound created by the irritating word or perhaps the mistaken motive. Yes! over the grave or the tomb of him whom untoward circumstances may have made our enemy, we may at last stand, and, forgetting the intervening past, recollect but the lovely and pleasant life of boyhood, and the love that then was "greater than the love of women;" and remembering then but the covenant which we made in other days, we may say, 'I am distressed for thee, my friend, and in the grave and beneath the sepulchre I bury all which may violate the covenant of our boyhood.'

c. But while this covenant was thus acted upon in after days, the covenant itself was a very striking and beautiful circumstance. Two young men, each of them full of high energies; ambitious, brave, and noble; the one beloved by the army, and the other soon to become the idol of the nation, and the "cynosure of all eyes," were nevertheless, so deeply conscious of their dependence upon God and the necessity of serving Him, as to bind themselves by an agreement of a distinctly religious character; thus evincing their piety and showing that the claims of God infinitely transcend the highest earthly employment. Such a thing is rare.

Their advantages had been comparatively few. The child of a shepherd, David had been constantly employed in the rude employments of the desert, while his companion had grown up in a godless court, and beneath the eye of a sceptical father. Few positions could have been more diverse the one to the other, and more counteracting to religious expression. The young among us, if I speak to such, have many opportunities of making a covenant like this. You came from home, many of you, full of religious desires and impressions. You came from home in the habit of saying your prayers. The very fact of your youthful condition makes you peculiarly open to convictions and to the appreciation of what is good or holy. A false shame keeps you down under the impression that it is inconsistent with youth to be thinking of the concerns of eternity. It is not unfrequent that two of you will walk together, play together, and be together perhaps for years, each of you feeling the same things with respect to religion, and yet neither of you daring to confess it to the other. When, however, occasionally, that ice has been thawed between you, and you have for the moment ventured to express to an-

other the deep feelings of your heart, you have realised a strength of purpose, an energy in holiness, and a determination to overcome some conscious fault in a way that you never knew before. I would suggest to you to act upon this as a principle and try the effect ; make the covenant with each other, to do right and to serve God.

Two of you, perhaps, have an inclination to use wicked expressions, or, in an unguarded moment, to take God's Name in vain. Make an agreement between yourselves that, with God's help, you will not for a given time offend ; try the effect of the covenant with one another for holy purposes. Perhaps your tendency may be to anger, to querulousness or to revenge. There may be instances at hand, occasions when you may be tempted to yield ; make them then the object of your covenant, that under God you will not break His law. You little know the influence of the act. In a moment there will come a thaw : a warm, soft, vernal hope of doing right springing from the mere fact of having acknowledged to each other the good feelings which heaved within you, but in vain, to find a crater, and you will provoke each other to good works. A righteous

emulation will be excited in you to vie with each other in self-mastery, and you will have reason to thank God for the "covenant that is between you." Many great men in days gone by have discovered the power of this principle, when they have banded together, united by the bonds of good resolutions and sacred covenants.

d. And again ; there is something very grand in the long pause in the personal communications between David and Jonathan. They loved each other as boys and as youths. When David walked forth fresh and ruddy from the wilderness of Bethlehem, and Jonathan shone in all the lustre of the son of a great king, the prince and the shepherd boy loved each other. They took delight in telling their love one for the other, and made their covenant before God in the field of Ezel, and their souls were satisfied. They saw each other no more in the passage of years. Indeed, David's eye rested not on the countenance of his friend, until it was brought a corpse from the streets of Bethshan. Trouble of all kinds marked the interval. The house of Jonathan was at war with David, and his father pursued him as a partridge on a hill ; the skirt had been rent at

Engedi, and the spear had been taken from the bolster ; the priests of the LORD had been slain by Doeg, and Abiathar had fled a fugitive to David ; the ears of Jonathan had heard nothing but execrations on the son of Jesse, and the young men who followed David had made Saul and his family a byword. Nevertheless, all this sufficed not to shake the foundations of Jonathan's love for David. They never met again ; still, at the news of the battle of Gilboa, the cry of David was more tender than even at the beginning ; "very pleasant wert thou, my brother Jonathan, dearer than the love of woman."

It is a very poor and narrow view, to imagine that real friendship should need constant expression. It is a deep, wide, lasting thing, whose seed is sown, as in some cases, in the period of boyhood, and may spring up into a plant which may shadow a long-after day, though the interval that elapses between the ratification of that friendship and the hour of death, may be marked by a long suspension of intercourse : aye ! and even by circumstances comparatively hostile to the very existence of friendship at all.

e. Another lesson that we learn from the friendship of these two youths is, that true

friendship exists in a desire to discover points of beauty and nobility in everything, however otherwise defective or polluted. Through the outward circumstance of a lineage opposed to the present and future interest of David, he was able to perceive, to value, and to love the noble qualities of Jonathan. While in the shepherd boy, whose destiny had been already declared by an unerring voice to be one which would finally eclipse the house of Saul, Jonathan was able to see the lustre of those qualities which eventually made David "the sweet psalmist of Israel" and "the man after God's own heart;" and seeing them, he had the disinterestedness to love them, and to ally himself to them.

Do you go and do likewise; and, if from the dark background of family animosity, ancestral feud, absence of high intellectual power or physical beauty, poverty of circumstance, the qualities of true nobility "stand fiery out," delight in them, love them, ally yourself with them! This is the true province of Christian friendship, which, like the loadstone passing over the vast and varied mass, instantaneously attracts and assimilates with itself every metallic portion from it.

Schoolboy friendship is one of the happiest and holiest opportunities of youth ; cherish and cultivate it. Let the rules of your covenant be simple yet true, borrowed from Scripture, not from the code of the world. Incite each other to courage, generosity, unselfishness, and defence of the injured. Ally yourselves to each other by the bonds of love ; let the eye and the look be sufficient to remind each other of the covenant ; let the consciousness of each other's presence in the room, in darkness, or in light, be a check to sin and an incentive to holiness.

LVIII.

SAMUEL.—PART II.

KEEPING SELF, AN ATTRIBUTE OF HOLY
YOUTH.—SAMUEL IN THE TEMPLE.

1 SAM. III. 1.

“AND THE CHILD SAMUEL MINISTERED UNTO THE
LORD BEFORE ELI.”

1. THE infancy and boyhood of Samuel were the parents of his after years, and the prayers of Hannah and the seclusion of the house of God, the safeguards which kept him through years of strife. But, besides this example, it is clear from the life of the prophet that there is a duty in preparing and protecting ourselves against temptation as well as in actually resisting it when it comes ; so in the health of the body there is a general condition and habit which we can gain, which will be the best preservative of health, and be far

more efficient towards that end than remedies which we may use when health is impaired. So again in matters of earthly warfare, the movement and position of an army, the arrangement of its line, and the state of its men, are more important towards the preservation of life and ultimate success than any amount of offensive or defensive armour. The same principle may be carried into religion. We are bound to be presenting continually such a front to Satan as will deter him from making an assault upon us.

Now popular views with regard to religion would lead us to distrust the position I have here taken. Some persons might be inclined to think that such a view leant too much to the idea that our inherent power was so strong as to be sufficient to resist and foil the attacks of Satan. But this is by no means the case. There are passages in Holy Scripture which lead us to see very plainly that certain opportunities can be seized by the powers of evil through which they are able to pull down the integrity of the soul; and that evil spirits wait for an opportunity of assaulting us, and to a certain degree are foiled and disappointed if we do not grant that opportunity. For instance, in the

parable of the "unclean spirit," which being driven from the soul wandered through dry places, "seeking rest and finding none," the warning is based upon the fact that to each evil spirit a single soul is assigned, and that the only resting place of that tempter till the day of judgment is the soul which is committed to it to be brought lost and ruined to the bar of God.

Now the simple principle involved in these words is this,—we are so formed originally that certain acts of ours are able to avert the operations of Satan upon us, and to present an all but invulnerable exterior to his attacks. The question therefore will be for us to ask, what are these acts which have so important an influence on our spiritual state? We have to ask the question, inasmuch as, if this principle be considered as true, we cannot too early begin to steel ourselves against the Evil one. In this we can scarcely avoid seeing the allegory involved in classical literature, where we read of the mother dipping her child in the stream, leaving but one portion vulnerable, and through that he met his death;—a striking lesson this to the Christian! lest while he attends to the ninety-nine points, he

voluntarily neglects the hundredth, and while he makes an exception in the case in which his own will is concerned, he omits the one thing needful to his own salvation, and through that very point receives his death wound.

With regard to this exterior armour by which we are to avert Satan's shafts, it is very clear that it has connection with that necessary consent or not of our own will to any attack made by the Evil one, so that in proportion as he is able to reach that will, in that proportion he is able to injure us, and, in proportion as that will is shielded from the attack, his aims are powerless for our destruction.

It is also remarkable that in a passage of the New Testament we are told to take heed not only lest the enemy wound us, but lest he "touch us," so that this defence, whatever it may be, will consist in what will prevent even the very contact of evil with our interior being.

2. *a.* I consider, then, that the first act towards this keeping of ourselves, is Self-respect. There is no exterior defence through whose chinks, if once broken, the lines of the enemy find so rapid and easy a way. One reason why we are inclined to do right and resist evil is that we have done right hitherto; and the

principle of continuity in us makes us wish naturally to finish what we have begun. So also we have a desire within us to act up to a character which we may have formed in ourselves; and if we have damaged a certain ideal which we have raised of self, we have thereby lost one of the springs and motives of action; as much as when the painter who draws from an imperfect or a partially eclipsed scene or object, or having copied a perfect one sees a blot on his imitation, loses half his pleasure. This is a law of our original nature, and we can no more account for it than we can for the primary desires to win the approbation of the good, and the respect of those in authority over us. If once we have destroyed the fair image which ever floats and lives before the eye of our own character, we have then taken away one of the great motives for resisting evil. That floating and moving form, like the star of Bethlehem, is placed continually before us in all the circumstances of life and is intended to attract us by its beauty until it settles down upon the final point of our journey heavenwards, the Throne of God come to judge human character.

b. The second great means towards this end

will be, to gain the habit of looking outwardly, yet not at the expense of looking inwardly, if our peculiar disposition and circumstances make that scrutiny of our moral condition necessary. There can be little doubt, that in proportion as some men look inwardly they weaken the external defences of the soul. It *may* be absolutely necessary that we should do it ; but inasmuch as the investigation of a natural infirmity opens the eye of the friend, or the probing process of the surgical instrument not only may bring disease to light, but also to a certain degree weaken the very member itself ; so the opening of the spiritual condition to the investigation of our own mental eye, opens it sometimes to the shafts and assaults of the tempter.

Few people are more tempted than those who are continually examining self and testing motive ; few characters are less tempted than those who are able to serve God faithfully, rather by remembering His law than by holding "their soul in their hand." I am not saying that this close analysis of self is not absolutely necessary for very many persons, for it is ; but what I want to urge is, that the preservative system is more aided by the exterior than

the interior process. The habit of constantly viewing God's Personality and attributes, the exceeding breadth of His Law, and at the same time the power with which it "searches the reins;" the habit of dwelling on the Incarnation or the Example of CHRIST; the study of the lives of saints, or the doctrine and discipline of the Church, all these will present a front, a compact and powerful armour which will have a peculiar force in resisting the assaults of the evil one. Without dwelling on the comparative value of the interior and exterior process, it is enough to urge the immense value of the latter as a means towards that keeping of the soul which is contemplated by S. John; and the more we can cultivate that habit by the study of the external objects of God's kingdom, the more impenetrable will our armour be.

c. A third portion of the defensive armour of self-preservation anterior to any temptation, should be the accustomed habit of devotions. There is a wide difference between the prayer "three times a day" before Daniel's open window, and "the exceeding bitter cry" of Esau for his blessing. There is a difference between the constantly repeated ejaculation of good Nehe-

miah, "O God, remember me for good," and the impulsive cry for pardon in the fifty-first Psalm. There is a wide difference between the stated and formal devotions of those who are described in Holy Scripture as going up into the Temple at the third and ninth hours, and the sad and plaintive wail of Hezekiah on his supposed death-bed. I place these parallels in order to show that while it is perfectly true that God will graciously and fully accept the extraordinary prayers wrung from conscious sin and sorrow, there will be naturally a constant inclination to value these at a higher rate than is their relative due. When offered in this manner they are not a preservative against temptation. There is, of course, a singular fascination in prayers of this kind, inasmuch as the sorrow or trouble which is their immediate cause, gives a power to realize earnestness in offering the prayer; nevertheless it is to the settled habit of regular devotion that we must look for a preservative against the assaults of the Evil one. He does not approach with the same boldness one who is shielded by the habit of constant devotion, although into the heart which utters the exceeding bitter cry, the tempter simultaneously

may enter the heart weakened in its resolutions, and already to a certain degree paralysed in its moral energies. He who has observed a healthy and regular course of devotions to God, independently of the actual grace, which, of course, is derived to the will and judgment from the mere recognition of the desire to cleave to God and to renounce evil, receives a protection against the assaults of Satan. He fears to approach or to throw down his challenge when the gage has already been taken up for heaven. Besides which the habit of frequent devotions—coming at regular intervals—so warns us against the insidious approach of evil, and so decides us in our choice of truth, that Satan has but little chance of gaining a hearing.

One preparatory step therefore to take towards “keeping ourselves” will be the rigid preservation of the habit of devotion, kept up without flinching, and without suffering any other call of the world to interfere with it; and though my immediate object in what I am now saying is not the suggestion of modes of devotion to be used, I could hardly do otherwise than ask the question, How much time in the day do we give to these exercises, and

what the devotions are that we are in the habit of using ? As a preservative against those temptations to which youths at school are so peculiarly exposed, I can hardly over-rate the value of keeping the definite hours of prayer to God recommended and practised by the Church ; their constant recurrence, their softening and mellowing influence ; their force and association, cannot do otherwise than keep every holy or religious inclination within us fresh when they might become dried up under the influence of evil companions and sinful examples. They will serve as a continual descending dew, giving life, and freshness, and vigour to every germ of holiness within us.

d. But again, while idleness is a great preparatory for temptation, occupation is a powerful defence. The mind must dwell upon something. It is a mighty and powerful centre of heaving energy ; it cannot slumber ; it must find a vent for itself somewhere ; the objects of sense connected with sinful associations present themselves on all sides to its attention. If it selects for itself objects for the exercise of its powers, it no longer lies like a vessel with idle sails, wooing every wandering gale.

Keep yourself fully employed. It is a trite

saying, but nevertheless strikingly and powerfully true, that Satan quickly finds employment for idle hands. Reading, conversation, the pointed observation of passing objects, amusement as well as the pursuit of the immediate vocation of life—all are good, all are better than having no definite occupation for the mind ; while in this world we stand in a market-place, and we must be the slave of the highest bidder. It is for us to decide whose servant we will be.

e. Another mode of “keeping self” will be keeping an habitual command over thoughts : musing and wakeful dreaminess are very dangerous as opening the soul to the assaults of Satan. There is hardly one class of sin that is not fed, as fire by fuel, through the medium of the mind. Exaggerated views, taken from the circumstances of life and from the conduct of those who may be among us, form and strengthen the habit of untruthfulness, which would very likely have never received the same form and definiteness, had it not been that the mind had been allowed to dwell upon and exaggerate these objects, and to clothe them with an idea separate from themselves, so that he who has indulged this habit

in this direction is immediately vulnerable to kindred assaults of the devil.

So again, thoughts of this kind pander to the sin of impurity, and like continual breathings fan its flame ; in fact, the whole force of impurity, as a distinct temptation, is based upon the opportunities that it offers to the exercising of the musing faculty. The power to bring images before the mind's eye, and to diversify and arrange these exactly at our own will, is one of the most dangerous faculties belonging to man. If we would provide as much as possible against the assaults of Satan to this particular sin, we shall form a habit of fixing the attention of our thoughts on subjects which are either themselves conducive to the good of our fellow-creatures, or are more directly religious. And this is very much more possible for us to form into a habit than we should at first sight imagine.

These early habits will be to us what the prayers of Hannah and the House of God were to Samuel ; and will not only help to consecrate our souls to God, but will be a continual safeguard to us until the hour of death.

LIX.

SOLOMON.—PART III.

WISDOM, AN ATTRIBUTE OF THE RELIGIOUS YOUTH.

1 KINGS III. 9.

**“GIVE THEREFORE THY SERVANT AN UNDERSTANDING
HEART TO JUDGE THY PEOPLE, THAT I MAY DISCERN
BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD: FOR WHO IS ABLE TO
JUDGE THIS THY SO GREAT A PEOPLE?”**

1. It is a significant circumstance, that both in the Old and New Testaments, we find most prominently put forward two men who were alike remarkable for heavenly wisdom, and the knowledge of those practical sciences connected with the structure of the physical world and languages, which, in too many minds, are connected with what is called carnal reasoning. Solomon in the Old Testament, and S. Stephen in the New, appear in the very crisis of the two dispensations.

It seems as if the whole aim of the patriarchal and Mosaic systems, as far as this world goes, had been gained by the character and position of Solomon ; while the seal of the Gospel teaching left its clear and definite impression on S. Stephen. Heavenly wisdom, heroic courage, unswerving self-denial, and love to the death, marked the character of the first deacon and martyr in the Gospel history, and seemed to proclaim with an unhesitating voice that in the character of the young disciple was embodied all, to accomplish which our Blessed LORD had taught and suffered.

The contemplation of these two characters, Solomon and S. Stephen, leads us to the conviction that God values very highly the devotion of powers of mind, and the development of all that is beautiful in the natural human character. He has not made the kingdom of heaven open only or even especially to the wise of this world, but He has given them a very important position, which shows how much He values their love to Him. The martyr is ever mentioned in such very high terms in holy Scripture, that we must attribute great importance to him who is selected to be first of that body. And S. Stephen's standing

in the van-guard of the army of martyrs, is at once a very significant circumstance, and leads us to feel sure that cleverness, eloquence, courage, intellect, personal attractions, and treasured learning, are gifts which are bestowed upon us for the sake of making more acceptable the sacrifice of ourselves to God, and are intended to be thrown into the holocaust of the sacrifice of our souls to Him. So S. Paul, the pupil of Gamaliel, was led to consecrate, on the altar of his self-devotion, vast powers of rhetoric, logic, language, knowledge of character, and historic research, to the cause of CHRIST. Timothy was learned in Scripture while yet a child, and Solomon ranks amongst the wisest of mankind. It is a great mistake to imagine, that, because "not many wise are called," the gift of the wise is not acceptable in a very high degree to God. In the same way that we esteem the devotion of the powers of the great in this world to be well made in the palace of the monarch, or the halls of the noble, so, when offered to the King of Heaven, we ought to view them as peculiarly worthy and peculiarly acceptable; if they are offered during life, they are worthy; if at death, and offered even *to* death, they are more worthy still.

There are few people to whom these remarks are so applicable as to youths in a school, if to any such I speak. You are young, and youth is a burning and glorious time, full of hope and boundless expectation : you are, many of you, gifted with intellect, and powers of imagination, and memory ; you are in a position singularly suited to cultivate these powers and make them effective ; you are, many of you, learned to a certain degree in the literature of the Church ; you too are exposed to the jest and the scoff of the libertine and the sceptic ; many of you are possessed of high personal courage and daring, even to death. It is my object to show you that one of your first aims should be to ascertain the powers that you have got, and, having ascertained them, to see in what way you can use them, so as best to glorify God. They are all of them opportunities of showing whether you are religious or not, and become vast means for those who will use them aright, to offer to God a sacrifice as acceptable as the martyr and the confessor of old.

I will place before you the position in which we are to view Solomon the wise king and S. Stephen the eloquent martyr. To enforce this subject better, I will specially here dwell on S.

Stephen. Stephen was a young man. He was possessed of theological learning to so high a degree, as to baffle altogether the efforts of the gainsayer or the sceptic. He appears to have had no ordinary share of eloquence. He was well instructed in the ecclesiastical history of the Jewish nation. His integrity, trustworthiness, and holiness, induced the Apostles to make selection of him for the Diaconate, in which he took a leading part; he displayed in no small degree alike moral and physical courage. The former quality he showed in his bold rebuke of the Pharisees and the Jewish nation generally; the latter he manifested in his violent and painful death; while his charity to his murderers in the hour of his martyrdom evinces a generous and forgiving heart. With all these attributes, radiating from the centre of extreme youth, S. Stephen presents a character of abounding interest to the young, and vindicates for ever, under the Gospel, as David and Solomon had done under the Law, the possibility of sanctifying personal courage and noble disposition by the grace of God. To you it speaks with great force. It seems to say that the young have a peculiar privilege in connection with the service of God; from your number the first martyr was

taken, and a Christian youth sentinels the open doorway which leads from Christmas through the coming year. His character seems to show you that you may exercise every manly and noble quality with which you are gifted, and not only make them subservient to, but an ornament of religion.

2. It will be well to take the separate features of S. Stephen's character and show their applicability to your position.

And, first, his masterly knowledge of philosophy and Scripture recommend him to notice in so great a degree, that he is described as being "full of power;" and more than that, of speaking with so much wisdom and spirit, that men of great learning could not withstand him. This at once leads us to see that it is possible to consecrate the highest powers of intellect to the cause of religion, and that it is by no means separable from courage. The journey of Cyrus, enlivened by his conversations on religious wisdom, serves as an illustration from ancient history of the union of the qualities.

a. There are many ways in which you may imitate these high examples. Try to realize to yourselves the fact that the cultivation

of your mind is due to God, and do not yield to the loose impression that the body and mind are to be cultivated only for this world, and the spirit only for the next. This idea, painfully common amongst many religious persons of a recent date, is borrowed to a great degree from the tenets, though scarcely from the practice, of the puritan school. It is a view which mutilates the integrity of the creature whom God has made in His own Image, and gives back to Him only a portion of that, the whole of which was to have been devoted to His service ; “in everything you are enriched by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, so that you come behind in no gift.” You are to love “the Lord your God with all your mind, with all your heart, and with all your souls.” Your first aim then should be to get into the habit of feeling that mental cultivation is a religious duty, and that one of the noblest offerings you can make to God is that of a highly cultivated intellect.

With that view, take care never to underrate the value of practical philosophy or the knowledge of language; the former tends to illustrate God’s Works, and the latter His Word. That mind is weak indeed which cannot bear

the knowledge that language with all its infirmities has been the medium of revealed truth, and that practical philosophy with all its discoveries may sometimes dissipate the mists of erroneous prejudice. Superstition is not religion, nor is mental ignorance a stepping-stone to spiritual knowledge.

b. Again, read with the intention, as far as possible, of finding out truth. The contradictions to this will be, reading for the purpose of discovering error, of pandering to sin, or of mere entertainment. God may be discovered in His attributes and requirements in the classic, and in the history, as in the sermon. The Christian youth will scarcely rise from *Æschylus* without being strengthened in his views of the moral obligations of religion; from *Sophocles*, without having his impressions as to the beauty of virtue intensified; from *Thucydides*, without being convinced of the religious responsibility of politics; or from *Herodotus*, without perceiving that from the beginning God has been speaking through national character and passing circumstance. Of course, you may, if you will, read the old Greek chronicles with views far other than those that are intended, and linger with satisfaction

on the detail of sad obscenities ; or you may read Horace for the sake of exciting or stimulating passion through the instrumentality of a lascivious ode. But this is your own fault. You may use the Bible itself so if you will.

And then, too, it would be a high thought, though perhaps difficult for many of you to put into practice, if you could get into the habit of applying the various parts of study to their higher and nobler aims. For instance, if the study of language could be invested with the deeper import of words ; if you could get yourself to look upon them as expressive of ideas, and that consequently, if they are confused, the ideas are confused ; it would be well. Remember that words have a reflex action on the mind that produces them, and that, if we suffer our expressions to become hazy and indefinite, our thoughts will soon become enveloped in the same mist. Our Blessed SAVIOUR is called "the Word of God," inasmuch as He entirely expressed in His Human Nature and conduct the complete Will of God. His Incarnation has consecrated all words for ever, from the first LORD'S Prayer of the infant to the everlasting hymn of praise which will sound throughout heaven.

All this may to a certain degree appear transcendental, and have a slight shade of unreality in it; nevertheless, it is as well to get the mind habituated to this style of thought. If you even contemplate the possibility of doing it, you will find yourself going in the groove the more easily and rapidly.

c. But S. Stephen in a singular manner not only devoted, but offered up his intellect to God. Possessed of a high power, which might have exercised its influence throughout the career of a long life in this world, he threw his whole energy into that power, which he knew would bring down death upon himself, and thereby cut short all his chance of exercising it in this world.

You, too, must learn the sacrifice of your higher powers to God, if need be. There may be many ways short of actual death which may enable you to do this: the devotion of powers for others rather than self; the being obliged to devote them in a line less attractive than the one you would choose; the being willing to give up some intellectual pursuit which immediately pleases, for one of a severer and still higher nature; the exercise of powers for the support of a parent, of a child, of a younger

brother, of the aged, or the orphan ; all these may be modes in which many of you in future life may be called upon to devote your intelligent powers by sacrifice to God, as S. Stephen yielded up his beneath the instrument of an early martyrdom.

d. But the proto-martyr showed that he possessed a well-stored mind, and that he was able to bring its treasures to bear upon the subject-matter of his calling. You too should aim at storing your mind with the treasures of history and knowledge ; and especially, as he did, with the knowledge of God's Word and with the events of His Church.

It is very lamentable that young men of the highest walks of English life, should be ignorant of the Bible history. Blunders of the grossest nature, which should excite a blush rather than a smile, have become the standing jokes of the examinations at our Universities. And yet, when we consider our immortal interests, the knowledge of God's treatment of human character and national circumstance should be amongst the first objects of our lives. The high masculine faith of Abraham ; the patient and meditative tone of Isaac ; the infirm and overweening affections of Jacob ; the

simple and childlike magnificence of Joseph ; the life-throes of Moses in Egypt and the wilderness ; the military renown kept in abeyance to religious awe in Joshua ; the versatile life of David ; the Songs and Proverbs, the buildings “exceeding magnifical,” and the moral infirmities, of Solomon : all these stored up now by your attention should be pictorially and graphically present to your memory in the treasure-house of after years. Surely, it is a shame for any Christian boy to know the tales of Jason and Medæa, the woes of the Atreidæ, or the calamities of Œdipus, better than the stories of Jezebel, the punishment of the sons of Saul, or the doom of the incestuous Amnon ! Surely it is a shame for any Christian youth to know the Odes of Horace better than the Psalms of David ! or to be better versed in the Phædo of Plato than in that Gospel which has brought “life and immortality to light !”

Nor is it only the history and facts of Scripture, which, after the example of S. Stephen, you should commit to memory, but also of the history of the Church of CHRIST, that society immediately instituted by Himself, in which we have so special a citizenship, whose destinies are eternal, whose course through the

world has been so irresistible, and whose continuous links have been unbroken. Why should you know more of the Samnite and Peloponnesian war than of the struggle of the Church against Arius and Nestorius? Why should you feel a deeper interest in Athenian Archons or in Roman tribunes than in the ministers of CHRIST'S everlasting Catholic Church? S. Stephen brought a magnificent record to bear, and you should bear the same. It may be you will have to do it in the conversation with the sceptic; it may be in the moment of personal doubt, when you would refer to the precedent of the past; it may be when you would instruct another; it may be when you would gain strength or consolation at the hour of death. Never mind when, you will be sure to find the moment when that knowledge will be applicable.

e. But there is another point in S. Stephen with which we are struck,—his personal courage. He was one who combined great physical with high moral powers, and who shows us that the two are not only compatible, but that the one adorns the other. His bold rebuke of the obstinacy and sinfulness of his people brought down upon him ejection and death, but he did not for a moment hesitate; his choice was

made from the beginning, and he well knew that if he served God he must do so at the risk of personal ease and life itself.

And now, in order to measure the power of his example, notice for a moment the nature of the sacrifice he made. We have read not only of men of ancient and modern history, who were prepared to die for the cause that they believed in, and did die for it, but also of those who have devoted the most brilliant powers in such causes. We have read also of those who gave up youth without a sigh in defence of what they believed to be true and noble. But in each of such cases, or nearly so, the cause has been one that has been honoured by mankind, and the sufferer has gone to his death attended by the shouts of the multitude. The laurels that girt the brow of the martyr to political or military glory have been gathered from the noblest bays and woven by the hands of the great and free; an immortality in the future of mankind gleamed like the dawn of morning before the eye of the sufferer, and the edge of the axe has been blunted, the fire of the stake quenched.

Such was the incitement which bore up Mucius when he drove his hand into the pan

of coals, and such the soul-inspiring support which urged Curtius as he leapt into the chasm to save Rome. The magnificence of a state glorious throughout a long future of coming ages gleamed like a waking vision before the eye of Codrus when he leapt into the battle; the thanksgiving of grateful thousands rose in dreamy echoes round the sense of Guyon of Marseilles as with his dying hand he dissected the livid corpse; and the eternal thankfulness of a ransomed country surrounded Eustace and his comrades as they marched beneath the gates of Calais. But all this we can easily understand; man has done it, and man will do it still. But when we are called upon to lay down life for a dishonoured cause, for one which no one respects, and which has, as yet, been untested in its results by the human race; when we have scarcely a precedent in history for our self-sacrifice, and scarcely a heart to sympathise or a voice to approve; that is hard indeed! And when, as in the case of the proto-martyr, the shame of a malefactor's death was flung so recently round the memory of his Master, and all that was noble, all that was wise, all that was lovely, all that was of good report, all that was tried and

tested by the experience of man, with one consent gave voice against the cause for which he was to die, the sacrifice must indeed have been great, and the faith burning which led to it.

But there is a further thought still. S. Stephen was the *proto-martyr*. When Ignatius looked on the gazing amphitheatre and folded his arms on his bosom at the roar of the advancing lion; when Cyprian walked forth amid the hymns and prayers of the Carthaginian Church to his happy martyrdom; when Augustine bared his bosom to the Vandal, as he burst into his sanctuary; when the victims of the rage of Huneric sang praises to God from their tongueless mouths, they could each one of them look back on an already lengthened past, and count a long procession of martyrs of days gone by. The echoes of a hundred hymns of death sounded round their ears, and they entered the storm of the battle as the rear-guard of an army whose van had nobly fallen; but to be the *first* was difficult—a martyr and a *proto-martyr*. True! Calvary rose behind him, and the Cross cast its shadow on the heap of stones. True! he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. It was enough,—“go and do thou likewise.”

LX.

SOLOMON.—PART IV.

THE BIRTHRIGHT OF TRUTH.

PROV. xxiii. 23.

“BUY THE TRUTH, AND SELL IT NOT.”

1. “BUY the Truth, and sell it not.” This forcible passage from the Book of Proverbs, speaks directly home to those who are in any way concerned with education. It declares two great truths. First, that truth is a matter of purchase; and, secondly, that there is a possibility of selling it, and an inclination to do so. The two branches of the text refer to a long process of acquiring, and a strong temptation to part with a great treasure. Before I examine the difficulty of the purchase, or the hazard of the barter, I will try to determine what that is which is deemed so valuable.

2. Truth is, of course, in itself, one, perfect and eternal; it was existing in its perfection in the days when the early races of man had discovered but its simplest element; it is somewhere perfect now, while we, like mariners upon the great sea of discovery, are trying to determine its limits; and at the end of time, Truth will still be, unaltered and unincreased since the moment of her birth. The continent of the New World, channelled by a hundred rivers and mountain streams; fringed with forests of unrivalled magnificence; girt by its belt of lakes—the connecting bond of two oceans, and sentinelled by the volcanic Andes, lay out in all its lustre beneath the sun, when Abraham rescued Lot; when Israel passed the Red Sea; when David ruled at Jerusalem; when Themistocles fought at Salamis, and Pompey at Pharsalia; and yet generation followed generation, and went down to the grave without knowing of its existence. At last, when discovered, it was discovered by slow degrees; but it was all there. Such is Truth, perfect yesterday, to-day, and for ever; lying out beneath God's eye, yet only known to us by slow and uncertain degrees. Each discovery swells the

amount of our possession, and though entire somewhere, to us truth increases day by day.

But it is most important that we should recollect that it is *to us* a growing and increasing treasure. The elements of that truth which we have got to preserve suggested by the teaching of the text, are the knowledge of the Nature of God revealed in Scripture and interpreted by the Church; the rules and aids of a holy life, contained in the teaching and example of CHRIST, His Apostles, and Saints; the knowledge and formation of our own mind, its powers and capabilities; the various pathways by which mankind advanced towards the present condition of civilisation; the political truths they borrowed from the varied forms of government in the East, or the West; social arrangement—the gift of Rome; taste and language contributed by Greece; the tributary streams which have poured their quota from ancient, mediæval or modern History into the great advancing tide of civilisation; the structure and the laws of the material universe—all these are portions of that great treasure of truth, which we are bound having bought not to sell, and the elements of which must form portions of the education of our land.

The discovery of truth rolls onward, widening as it rolls ; while along its banks far back gathered the eager crowds of inquirers, who came to dip their vessel into the passing stream. To each company it appeared broader ; it swelled in a more magnificent current ; it washed the banks of a deeper channel. We see men, as we look deep in the mist of the morning of time, Hesiod and Homer bending over the narrow water in which was reflected, but dimly, the Nature of God, and more clearly the nature of man ; farther on Pythagoras, and Thales with his eye on the material universe ; Solon the philosopher of legislation ; and Thucydides seeking truth in historic story ; while here a clearer sunbeam pierces the mist, and settles on the form of him who, at a wider reach of the onward stream, is plunging his vessel for a deeper draught, Socrates the Athenian martyr, and Plato his disciple ; further still the figures crowd, as the river approaches its wider span, until we see walking along its nearer shore, the "LAMB of GOD That taketh away the sins of the world." But it widens still : the Grace of the SPIRIT brings out more and more, like the dew of the morning, the drops radiant with truth : and the eye pauses

as it passes along the hundreds that are gathered there, the Apostle of the Gentiles, and the beloved Disciple; Ignatius the aged martyr, and Clement "in the Book of Life;" Athanasius the bulwark of the faith, and Augustine the defender of holy practice; Francis the evangelizer of India, and Pascal profound in thought. We cannot see where the river rushes to its sea: it may be far, it may be near; but we see the shore where we are standing, and we know the truth that we have bought.

3. I have dwelt more especially on the religious elements of truth; it is with them that I am dealing now; that truth which has been delivered down to us through the Scriptures, the Creeds, and the Sacraments of the Church, from time to time added to by the gift of the SPIRIT, and corrected and purified from adventitious error. In this form it is given down to us as a whole. We have got it; it has been "bought," "sell it not!" That which has been purchased by the life-blood and agonies of our fellow-creatures, we who are the happy inheritors, ought not to wish to receive without some self-sacrifice and effort on our own part.

How then shall we, who have got truth,

devote ourselves in any way to its enlargement, or retention? One way in which we all of us can continue to purchase truth, is by having the eye ever open to its still developing lessons. There is no day in which God is not teaching us individually something more, in which some pure, and new portion is not being added to the nucleus already formed, some new application of the truth already received. For instance we know, as a portion of our heritage of truth, that the SPIRIT has sanctifying power; every day produces the necessity of some act which illustrates that power. Or again, we are every day adding to our stock of experience from the knowledge of man or God's dealings with him. The keeping the mind's eye attentive on these things, is of itself difficult, and realises the idea of purchase.

Or again, a more direct means of the acquisition of truth will be reading, meditation and conversation. All these lie in our power, and the very difficulty which they cause in their call for method and plan, realises the idea of a price that is being paid.

The reproof of the wise and good or of those in authority over us will be a third means by which we can purchase truth for our-

selves. There are few things harder than to take reproof well; we always imagine that in the point for which we are blamed lies our peculiar defence from blame. "All my delight," says David, "is in the saints and such as excel in virtue." The reproofs of the righteous are constantly lauded by him, and the chance of their precious balms breaking his head deprecated. Nathan reproved David, S. Paul reproved S. Peter, and in both cases as it was received humbly it added to their stock of truth.

Prayer to God becomes a constant mode of purchasing truth for ourselves. "Ask, and ye shall receive, seek, and ye shall find;" "to him that hath shall more be given." Prayer will materially add to our stock of truth; it is a vast talent when laid out to advantage, and the time devoted to it and the self-seeking given up for it, will enable us to realise that we purchase truth with pain and sacrifice. In all these ways, and in many more, we may fulfil the conditions of the text.

4. But in a more emphatic manner still we may do our duty in the cause of truth, not so much by purchasing it, as by "not selling it." To a certain degree truth is rather our birthright than the result of a price that we have

paid. Take care you do not sell it "for a mess of pottage." This brings me to the second part of the text: "sell it not."

5. There is great danger lest we sell what has been gained by the sufferings of centuries, and cut ourselves off from the blessings which generations of our ancestors have striven to give us.

It may seem strange that there should be the least temptation to sell what has been thus purchased; but this becomes the less remarkable when we recollect how high a price and how luring a bait the devil and the world will offer for principles which they are so jealous of our holding. Too many yield to the luring offer without hesitation, and, in proportion as the prize is high, that offer will be attractive. Amongst other shrines at which we shall be tempted to sell the truth in this day, there are none more common than those that are raised by the principles of erastianism, commercialism, and scepticism; and as offering high and subtle dangers to us in life, I will offer some suggestions with regard to each of them.

The first of these principles which we have so much to dread, lest truth be sold at its shrine, is the commercial spirit of our day and land. It may seem that the young have but little

to do with this ; they are in but small danger of bartering the truth they have received for the sake of the commercial grandeur of their country or the aggrandisement of their age. But in one sense, I speak of the future, in which so many of us must of necessity be cast in the midst of many and great dangers. It would therefore be at least as well that I should suggest them in outline ; and indeed, I cannot but remember how many of these very temptations obtrude themselves in miniature into the precincts even of a school ; and how the great and heaving waters which are in such tumultuous motion in the world ooze through the external defences which surround the seat of education, and the carelessness of youth. The mere fact of giving a greater prominence to one leading principle over and above another in itself tends to check the influence and by degrees tends to impair the secondary principle. If, for instance, we make all the arrangements of time and place, turn all the powers of our mind and ingenuity on the world, and bestow but a little or a mere fragment of that energy upon the acquisition or retention of truth, it is clear we are selling truth in the market of money-making. There are

cases in which the refusal to strengthen our hold on what we have got is equivalent to the positive and conscious sale of it. We can hardly pass from the north to the south of our land without being struck with the preponderance of the factory over the Church, and the foundry over the school, of the elaborate magnificence of town halls when compared with the fabrics raised to the glory of God. All this shows us as by letters of fire on the wall, that we are in danger of sacrificing the religious to the commercial principle.

But again, the enormous masses of the middle class of our population, and the rising consequence which they are gaining by their influence, alike over the higher as over the lower orders, creates a danger lest we yield to this overwhelming interest those simple first truths which are among the most precious heritages of the Church. The great body of the community are, from the mere circumstance of their occupation in the practical details of daily life, unable to examine or to lay hold of those deeper truths; consequently the appreciation of the great doctrines of the Church and of education amongst us is likely to be low and unworthy.

There are many ways in which we are tempted to sell the truth to what I have called the commercial spirit of our age and country. Amongst the most prominent will be the mode in which the arrangements of the kingdom of CHRIST are compelled to make way for the arrangements of this world. It might be the just and natural boast for countries in communion with the see of Rome that the Church amongst them does not suffer her arrangements and her laws to be suspended or affected by those of the world around her. The Catholic hours are kept ; the nave is filled with worshippers throughout the day ; the priests are ever ready to attend her call, and the sound of the chant or the whisper of the confessional are continually echoing throughout each hour of the day, witnessing to the independence of the Church of the world. We once gave up our daily Service and our weekly Communion, and they are but few comparatively who have resumed them. In many parishes there are churches whose doors are locked from Sunday night to Sunday morning again ; and the religion of a week is crowded into two or three tedious hours of a dull Sunday. To what can we attribute this more easily and naturally than to

that feverish appetite for gain which drives so many among us to seize every hour of the week-day for the business of this world, and make so many who are like Martha, "cumbered about" the services of life, cast a contemptuous or reproachful look upon those who are "sitting at the feet" of JESUS. The evil of this absorption of mind and time by the spirit of earthly gain is manifold.

a. It is especially felt in two ways ; not only by the little time that there is given to directly religious exercises, but also by the false position into which religious days are themselves thrust ; so that Sunday being the single centre of external worship to the people, many fear, lest if they should assert for it a greater cheerfulness and relaxation of employment, and a less judaical asceticism in its observance, they should shake to the foundation the pillars of that religion which the nation has retained ; the result of which must be that multitudes, seeing no necessary injunction laid upon them to observe the holy day in this fashion, will rush into great excesses of laxity ; while others, crowding into the hours of the first day of the week a great mass of religious exercises, discourage others and sometimes themselves in

the pursuit of religion altogether. Then, too, the hours of services, where they are used, are often so compelled to yield to the arrangements of the world, that in the eyes of multitudes a discredit is cast upon the dignity and independence of the Church altogether. Nay, more, if under the brooding cloud, laden with impending pestilence, we are called upon like Nineveh of old, to humble ourselves under the chastening hand of God ; or if we are bidden, when that cloud has passed away, and joy and gladness beam in every dwelling, with gratitude to recognize God as the Giver of this and every other good by a special day of Thanksgiving, there is often a difficulty raised as to the expediency of devoting a special day borrowed from the employment of the week for these purposes ; and while we are continually prone to " render to Cæsar " the things that are God's, we are unwilling to render to God the things that are Cæsar's. All this flows from that absorbing commercial spirit of our day on whose altar we are inclined to sell Truth, in the matter of the observance of holy seasons and of days of devotion ; the establishment of which our fathers bought with their blood, and which we received as a glorious

inheritance at our birth and baptism. Hungry for the things of this world, we sell our birth-right for a mess of pottage.

b. But again, attributable to the same commercial spirit is the inclination to extol certain virtues which conduce to the advantage of a commercial community, at the expense of virtues which do not immediately affect it ; and to judge with a severity scarcely worthy of the Church of CHRIST certain faults which hinder these interests, and to pass comparatively lightly over faults equally heinous in the sight of God, if not more so, those of the adulterer, the fornicator, the intemperate, the habitual swearer, the sarcastic sceptic, and the habitual absentee from the Holy Eucharist, who are received within the limits of a society which with the most exact rigidity excludes from its pale him who has the slightest shade cast upon his name by untruthfulness, dishonourable conduct, or kindred faults. I do not say this to make light of any one of these latter sins, but to protest against the way in which these faults are visited with a severity, no approach to which is used with regard to those other sins mentioned above, so that it would be thought a culpable breach of charity and a pharisaical self-righteous-

ness in a man if he should openly condemn men living in these sins and refuse to meet them in society. This flows from that commercial spirit of our day and land which dreads the slightest infraction of its principles or weakening of its defences by the faults of members of society which are akin to those I last mentioned, and is comparatively indifferent to faults which do not affect the safety of its own institutions.

The result of this must be, to a certain degree, the subversion of the practical discipline of the Gospel and the laws and discipline of the Church, both of which put forward sin as to be shunned owing to the hatred God has for it; and would direct that the habitual and impenitent sinner should be to a certain degree excluded from the society of the good. Here, then, is another altar on which we are tempted to sell those elevated views of Christian practice and holiness which our fathers sealed with the blood and anguish of martyrdom. They delivered down those truths as an heir-loom to us, and the guilt lies at our door, if having received them, we sell them to the peculiar spirit of our age.

c. But the commercial spirit suggests its temp-

tations also when it appears as a successful rival to the claims of religion generally in the country ; when we are compelled to turn our eye from the affluence displayed in the window flashing with the wealth of trade, or the vast magnificence of the hall of commerce, to the often saddening and melancholy homes of Divine Worship. How painful it is to see the mart of commerce elaborate with Corinthian architecture, while the House of God is mean, insignificant, and unimportant ! How immediately must such a state of things impress the mind of the ignorant and uneducated with the conviction, that the great truths of Christianity are in the eyes of the powerful scarcely more than a myth ; and that those customs which we have received consecrated from the apostolic age, are to be placed aside when weighed in the balance with the claims of commerce and the exigencies of trade. How deeply they must feel that the truth which they had been assured had been bought with so much agony, was being sold on the altar of the expediency of the moment. I say this advertently ; the result must be, in the long run, an impression on the popular mind that the kingdom of God and His righteousness are neither sought nor

believed in "first," but that "the purple and fine linen," and the sumptuous fare of wealth and earthly magnificence are the primary objects of regard.

The preacher may enforce the axioms of Christianity from the pulpit, and the catechist may develop the germs of inherent truth; the walls of sacred buildings may ring with the lessons of heaven; nay more, holy men may have passed through the crowded street, and lingered in the mart of commerce; but the force of all this may be neutralized or negatived by the far more tangible fact which I have referred to, that men actually realise the importance of things of time above that of those of eternity.

5. But there is yet another altar on which men are tempted to sacrifice the truth which they have won or received: that of narrow-minded exclusiveness in the application of the privileges and blessings of truth, by which party is substituted for the Church, and the narrow limits of sectarianism for the comprehensive boundary of Catholicity. This spirit is too much the spirit of England of the present day. We have too little of that true width and comprehensiveness which have ever been the

signs of the Catholic Church. If we show marks of elasticity, it is in the direction of latitudinarianism borrowed from Germany, rather than the natural offspring of our own genius ; learnt in the school of sceptical philosophy, rather than the teaching of any school of our own. The Gospel was wide ; early Catholicity was wide ; later Catholicity wider still ; yet all were contained within the limits of necessary and eternal Truth. The doctors of early Christendom, whatever were their leanings, were wide in their sympathies. Augustine at Hippo and Athanasius, whatever were their peculiar tendencies, were, nevertheless, vastly comprehensive in their sympathy and teaching, because they were Catholic.

Through onward centuries the Church, where her spirit has been truly felt, has been, as a fold must be, exclusive. But how extended have been the limits of her fold ; how loud her cries, how deep her yearnings that the sheep might be gathered 'in from the wilderness ; though exclusive, she has not been narrow. In England our religious movements have often been narrowed, niggard, and exclusive. Such were the Anabaptists in Elizabeth's day, the Independents of Charles the First's, and the hundred

sects of our own. And such, unhappily, has too often been the Church movement, in a measure, of our own immediate time. It may arise from national character, or it may arise from something worse. It is a fact, and I would deal with it particularly in connection with the last illustration I took. Men have rightly seen that if Christianity was true, it must come to us through the medium of the Church, and that the effort to sever the light which streams through the glass upon the pavement of our chancel, from the medium through which it passes, would be as successful as to separate Christianity from Catholicity. With such a view it was perfectly consistent to propound the articles of the Creed dogmatically, to enforce the necessity of Sacraments, and to assert the integrity of Catholic communion ; to bring out in fresh light and colour the faded discipline of bygone days, to offer to the sinner and the penitent hope and pardon ; to give the framework of holy hours and frequent public worship, to support the energies of the religious spirit, and to elevate the examples of saints to the tempted, the hesitating, or the infirm.

But while all this was right, it was necessary

to use a sound judgment, a single mind, and wide sympathies in the application of these truths. And has this been sufficiently done? It is apparent that the great object of winning the soul is the primary one to the Church, and that where the mode of applying the machinery to this purpose fails by repelling any religious earnestness and sincere desires to serve God, there must be some error in the mode of application, inasmuch as the Church herself is the body constituted and appointed by God to represent and find a true object and home for all those yearnings.

The Church of CHRIST is that body which is intended to receive into itself and find a home for every desire of the human mind. Whatever yearning there might be which proceeded from the genuine and honest desire to serve God was destined to receive its answer and its aim in that vast machinery which God had elaborated for the salvation of man,—the everlasting Catholic Church. It is as difficult to conceive the possibility of earnest yearnings after lowliness not being implanted in us by God, as to imagine a Church which is destitute of elasticity sufficient to comprehend every desire towards good which has been ingrafted

by a beneficent Creator. This being the case, we are not surprised to find that in the purest days of Church influence, no earnest body of what we should now call dissenters grew up outside her limits. She received all into herself, she found room in her bosom, and as time advanced the cords of her tabernacle were stretched wider and wider over the sand of the wilderness, so as to embrace within its folds at once every honest seeker after truth and holiness.

If such were true of the Church in the earlier and later periods of her existence, it would be unnatural that the body that professes to represent the Church in this day should leave encamped around her own trenches in the attitude of foes those who with a greater width of purpose and mind could be found perhaps fighting beneath her banners. Why are the Wesleyans where they are, antagonistic to the Church? Why are the Baptists where they are? would not the application of the system of the Church be sufficiently comprehensive and elastic to absorb these bodies? The Wesleyans craved originally after increased discipline and the opportunity of expressing their religious feelings and recording their experience. The Baptists yearn after a fuller recognition of conscious

penitence and conscious faith in the reception of the sacraments. The Church might have given through her primitive discipline to the Wesleyan, and perhaps even to the Baptist, an opportunity of realising their aims. It is a feature of the English Church that she is so un-elastic; and it reflects no credit but rather a reproach upon those bodies within her, who profess especially to assert her spirit and her laws, to be exclusive in the application of them; to lose rather than win souls by a rigidity or narrowness of government; to arouse open opposition where the aim should be in their respective spheres to show that the Church, which represents the Body of CHRIST Himself, has in herself that yearning love whose root and germ we find in the Life of our LORD and the Gospel that He preached. It is perfectly true that great principles must be fought out on the battle-ground of trifles; that on the giving and receiving of a ring and a crosier once depended disputes that rent and agitated Europe; and that success or defeat on that question determined the momentous points at issue between the Church in England and the central See at Rome; proud Norman sovereigns and unswerving pontiffs in the chair

of S. Peter. It is perfectly true, that in a later day, other apparent trifles have been the acts on which allegiance or hostility to the Church were hung; they were in their day the shibboleths of a great movement; nevertheless they may have been comparatively unimportant; and if asserted for their own sakes, (while the assertion of them tends to injure the unity of the Christian body) they surely should be yielded in deference to the higher and deeper principle of love, when by the yielding of them men can be drawn closer to God and each other, and no real compromise of Truth be made.

If in a parish ignorance is likely to be broken down, and prejudice frayed away by holding out the right hand of real fellowship, and by the simple introduction of those less offensive and more essential features of the Church,—daily service and weekly communion,—there be any chance of absorbing external bodies, surely the first great aim should be to accomplish this end. The main object after the firm assertion of truth must be that of charity and unity, and the striving after individual influence, consistency of life, earnest appeals to individual cases, parochial visitation and the like, before we can imagine that the weapons of persuasion

are exhausted, or that we are justified in resorting to what rather tends to increase than to stay the rent in CHRIST'S garment. There is a danger of self-seeking and personal notoriety in these movements, which, where they exist, would make still more unjustifiable the infringement of that greater law of love and charity for the sake of asserting the inferior one of symmetry and uniformity. Of course, what I say here must not be supposed to refer to any of those questions that involve the essential principles of the Christian Church.

Such will be one of the altars on which men in the present day for many palpable reasons are inclined to "sell the Truth" that they have bought. Through long and deadly struggles we have purchased and retained the glorious truths of the Catholic Church in opposition to the encroachment of counter principles. Our fathers achieved this work through the long struggles with the Lollards, the terrible ordeal of the Reformation, especially in the reigns of Elizabeth and James I., the bloody persecutions, endured beneath the victorious arms of the Puritans and Independents in the reign of Charles Stuart: through the undaunted constancy of the Non-jurors in two

successive reigns, in the effort to keep alive the slumbering ember of attachment to the Church during periods of lethargy or treason ; while more recently this has been done despite the extreme difficulty of persuading earnest-minded men that the truth lay more in the corpse-like form of the Church than in the feverish body of Wesleyanism ; and in many a parish now through the land where for years honest Churchmen have been fighting the battle of the Church against the low Church school on one side, and the rationalist on the other ; we have “bought the Truth” of Catholic teaching and retained it ; let us not “sell it” now at the altar of a narrow-minded and illiberal spirit.

6. But there is a third and more imminent danger threatening that truth which we have been so many centuries gaining. There is a spirit of rationalism abroad, whose rapacity is so keen that it assails every portion of the foundation of faith, and at the same time its efforts are so subtle and plausible as to make it amongst the most formidable enemies of our day, and to offer singular allurements to those who have the Truth in possession. It is the duty of every one to resist the encroachments of this principle, and especially those concerned in educa-

tion are bound to take continual heed lest what they have received as an heirloom to be given down to future generations, should be adulterated and impregnated with these perilous views. The temptation no doubt is greater than we imagine. The fascinating idea of universal education by the fusion of all creeds, of reaching at length some under-deck on which men may stand,—never mind how low down—without dispute, side by side with each other; the hopes of mastering great social problems, all float before the eye. Then again, there is an apparent reasonableness in these opinions, a strong common sense, which seem to defend them from the possible charge of transcendentalism and excess, and which are the peculiar property of these views, and make them highly dangerous, and a very strong temptation.

The leading feature in this school at this moment seems to be the direct attack they appear to be willing to make on Holy Scripture, and the doctrine of Inspiration generally. It is not my object to go into the details of that momentous question; but it is quite within my aim to urge, and, by way of suggestion, especially addressed to those who are concerned in education, the absolute necessity

of placing Holy Scripture on the right foundation, and on an arena upon which we shall be able with advantage to fight the battle. If we refuse to do this we are guilty of "selling the Truth" which we have "bought" or received. The only safe basis on which Scripture can stand is that of the Church ; she decided its canon ; she first suggested the salient points of its teaching, and to her keeping, as to a steward, were its oracles committed. If once we give up the authority of the Church, we either give up to our antagonist, without a blow, the whole question of Inspiration, or we offer to fight it with the blunted weapons of idealism and subjectivity. If, throwing all other proof away, we simply defend the inspiration of S. Paul's Epistles on idealism and subjectivity, it must end in a failure. Tried by these standards, S. Paul's Epistles must rest for their evidence on their agreement with the instincts and pre-conceived opinions of the individual who is considering them ; and if such instincts be of an unchristian nature, the result must be that the investigation will place the great Apostle but in the van of an army of civilization, and that in proportion as he presents a fitting object of hero-worship. The result of

which mode of handling scripture must be to destroy its unity and integrity, the severance of S. Paul from the college of the Apostles ; and the starting two separate, though parallel, lines of teaching in the New Testament. Under such a system of testing the inspiration of scripture, the apparent difference between S. Paul and S. James, might become real ; S. Stephen be looked upon as a mere Hellenist, without any distinctive Christian energy, and the influence of the brother of our LORD himself be considered as impaired by the fact of his attachment to the principles of Judaism.

Scripture viewed as a collective whole and given to us by a distinctive, definite authority, each part necessarily cohering with the other, receives at once a light which blends into apparent unity all these discrepancies, and explains at once what appear to be inconsistencies. But this collective form of scripture has only been given us through the instrumentality and arrangement of the Church ; she has decided on the canon, arranged the books, interpreted the sense, and given us the whole volume, as we now have it, in its unity and integrity. Once remove that bond, by which the several parts cohere, the authority of the Church, and

you have to examine for yourself and decide upon the claims of each separate portion of the whole ; and who, of those who jealously reject the connection of Church authority with Scripture, is prepared to do this ? Nothing so drives us back on the Church as the Bible ; no two things are more inseparable, and nothing would so tend to make a thoughtful man an earnest Catholic as a deep value for the Holy Scriptures.

It is most important therefore, that we open our eyes to the coming evil, and stand firmly against the offers of those who would tempt us to sell our blood-bought heritage of the Scriptures of God and the natural reverence for them.

Those who would assail them will do it through various means : either the text will be assailed ; but then, how important and valuable are the many quotations by the early Church ; or the attack will consist in the acceptance or rejection of certain books professing to be inspired ; on the question of the extent to which inspiration goes, and how far certain methods and modes of teaching may be considered as merely the result of natural disposition or the result of supernatural revelation ;

the probability being, surely, that God would work through the latter. How far the decisions, opinions, and modes of expression of men like S. Paul and S. Peter may be considered as entirely natural, or how far they are the result of direct revelation is a matter for the Church alone fully to decide for us.

The leaves which hang and cluster on the boughs of the autumnal tree droop silently and motionless in their calm decay. To our eye they present one glowing aspect reflected from their rich colouring. We do not see the framework which keeps them together. Yet without these boughs the whole would fall to the dust, and the fair vision in a moment collapse and dissolve. We see and live on the truths of Holy Scriptures ; the interpretations of their text ; the examples and lives of Apostles and holy men of old. We gaze on the fair vision and are satisfied ; we do not, perhaps, see and therefore do not recognize the framework which gave to all position, grouping and beauty—the Church. Imagine her non-existence, and the lovely vision on which we have lived is gone.

And there is one other mode of attack we may expect to be made upon Holy Scripture ; that is the effort to attribute natural causes to

those circumstances and facts which we have hitherto esteemed miraculous. This has already been done in more than one remarkable instance by those who have tried to invalidate the force of scripture. There are two especial ways in which this objection should be met :—first, by rejecting the prejudice that Christianity is essentially based on miraculous interference; and, secondly, by continually pressing the inestimable importance of that proof which is borrowed from the analogy and internal evidences of God's providence, so powerfully suggested by Bishop Butler. These are the principles which every one of us are bound,—having bought not to sell, and which those especially, who are connected in any way with schools are bound to assert and defend.

There are many other modes by which men are tempted to sell purchased Truth: modes which cannot be discussed here at the present moment. We are the executors of a Great Will: the Testament of the Cross and of the Day of Pentecost. We are responsible for our administration of it. But more than that, we are heirs of the property and the inheritance which that Will distributes. We all of us stand in two relationships. If we forfeit our claim of

having performed the one faithfully, we forfeit the other. If we betray our trust, we forfeit our inheritance, and cancel for ourselves at least the Testament of Calvary, and the Covenants of the Bride of CHRIST.

LXI.

JEHOSHAPHAT.

PROSPERITY.

2 CHRONICLES XX. 30.

“SO THE REALM OF JEHOSHAPHAT WAS QUIET: FOR HIS GOD GAVE HIM REST ROUND ABOUT.”

1. JEHOSHAPHAT is not unlike Hezekiah and Josiah. In fact the latter kings of the house of David were by no means dissimilar. The old man often returns to the character of the child, and the advanced stage of the history of a nation and a family closely resembles its beginning. It is often the case that the circumstances of life have brought out powers and energies which sink again when those circumstances are removed. And this is more particularly the case in the middle period of life. Events build up a superstructure which falls when the support of those events is removed. In the history of

nations, when the national energy has been worn out to a certain extent, the characters of kings and heroes return more to the type of the earlier and more elementary days of the national history. In the life of man too it is often the case, that when the middle age of pressing circumstance and keen excitement has passed away, old age becomes emphatically a second childhood, and the characteristic features of the boy come out again, when the hair is grey and the brow ploughed with the share of time. In connection with this thought it is interesting to watch in the line of the kings of Judah the simple and childlike characters which from time to time appear after the type and model of their father David, Jehoshaphat in the middle of the line and Josiah near the conclusion.

2. Jehoshaphat's personal character seems to have had very distinctive features in it. The principal circumstance of his life is connected with the battle of Ramoth-Gilead. He succeeded his father Asa on the throne, about that unhappy period when conspiracy and usurpation were marking the history of the kings of Israel. We read but little of him until the time when Ahab sent to him, saying, Know ye that Ramoth-

Gilead is ours, and we be still and take it not out of the hands of the king of Syria : wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth-Gilead ? and Jehoshaphat said, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses. And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Inquire, I pray thee, at the hand of the LORD to-day." And the king of Israel had gathered together four hundred prophets, but not satisfied with these, Jehoshaphat said, Is there not a prophet of the LORD besides, that we may inquire of him ? Ahab mentioned Micaiah the son of Imlah, but said that he hated him. And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so." After the prophecy of Micaiah the two kings went down to battle—Jehoshaphat boldly in his robes and Ahab in disguise. In the midst of the attack Jehoshaphat was saved by the Providence of God.

We are told that though he walked in the ways of Asa his father, doing that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from it, nevertheless the high places were not taken away ; the people still offered and burnt incense in the high places. We are told also that this Jehoshaphat "had riches and honour in abundance," nevertheless that "he

joined in affinity with the wicked house of Ahab."

He seems also to have placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in all the land of Judah and the cities of Ephraim ; and that in all this God was with him because that he walked in the first ways of David his father ; therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand. And all Judah brought him presents : and again we are told, he had riches and honour in abundance. One result of all this great earthly success was to lift up his heart in gratitude to God as the giver of it all.

Another result was to lead him vigorously to assail idolatry, and establish a kind of mission consisting of princes and Levites and Priests to teach in all the cities of Judah ; five princes, two priests, and nine Levites. And as they went they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the LORD with them, and they taught the people.¹

The effect of all this movement on the part of Jehoshaphat was remarkable, for the fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms round about Judah, so that none made war on Jehoshaphat ; and this feeling went so far that the

¹ See 2 Chron. xvii. xix. xx.

Philistines brought him gold and silver presents, and the Arabians brought him seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred he goats. The end of all this prosperity was that he waxed strong exceedingly, and that he built castles or palaces and cities of stone; and we are told that he had much business in the cities of Judah, besides men of war—mighty men of valour. It was in this state of things that he went up with Ahab to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, and after the battle he returned to Jerusalem in peace.

But his coalition and alliance with Ahab were severely reprovèd; and Jehu the prophet came and said, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from the LORD; nevertheless there are good things found in thee in that thou hast prepared thy heart to seek God." Impelled by this reproof, Jehoshaphat set to work to bring back the people to the LORD God of their fathers; and he set judges over the land, and his special instruction to these judges was, that they should "take heed what they did, for that they judged for the LORD and not for men."

After this he had a signal triumph over his

enemies, and is described as returning in the forefront of the triumph to Jerusalem, singing praises to God. And then came that well-known act of his sending ships to Ophir for gold, but "they were broken at Eziongeber"—an act so illustrious in the history of the Holy Land. His refusal to let the servants of Ahaziah, son of Ahab, go with him is remarkable.

After this the children of Moab and Ammon came against Jehoshaphat to battle, on which occasion we have an account of the proclamation of a fast and a prayer offered by the King, which is among the most striking prayers in Holy Scripture, ending with the words, "we know not what to do, but our eyes are upon Thee." And all Judah stood before the LORD with their little ones, their wives, and their children; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon a prophet, who declared God's intention to save them: Jehoshaphat expresses his firm belief in God's intention to preserve them, and said to the people,—"Believe in the LORD your God, so shall you be established; believe in His prophets, so shall you prosper." He then, after a consultation with the people, appointed singers to the LORD, who should praise the beauty of holiness.

And as they went out before the army they said, "Praise the LORD, for His mercy endureth for ever." At the moment of the outburst of the song of praise God interfered with His promised help ; and Jehoshaphat and the people took immense spoils, both riches and precious jewels, more than they could carry away ; and they were "three days carrying away the spoils, it was so much." They then offered God special praise in the valley for the victory, and returned to Jerusalem with psalteries and trumpets to the house of the LORD.

It appears however that, in spite of these strikingly religious acts, the high places were not taken away because the people had not prepared their hearts to seek God. At the conclusion of his life in the book of Chronicles we are told, in connection with the expedition of ships to Ophir, that Jehoshaphat did join himself with Ahaziah in making ships, on which occasion Eliezer prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah the LORD hath broken thy work ; and the ships were broken, and were not able to go to Tarshish ;" and Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried.

This, then, is the striking summary of the life of one of the principal Kings of Judah,

whose circumstances are dwelt upon with a greater minuteness in the book of Chronicles than in the book of Kings. It would, indeed, appear that, with the exception of Solomon, he was the most important of all the kings, and may naturally be compared with him. In point of character and disposition he much resembles Hezekiah, especially in his love of magnificence, and his firm trust in God,—so strangely set off against the inconsistency of his reliance on the human arm.

We may notice in passing, that there were many points of similarity among the kings of Judah; that the presence of the temple and its worship seems to have had a just influence in the formation of their characters; and that the absence of such external memorials of religion led to general declension of character in the Kings of Israel. Jehoshaphat himself seems to have been singularly favoured by God in point of circumstance. Victory ever attended his arms, and by his wars he won the homage of the neighbouring states. There is a pomp about his war which is highly interesting; he appears to have taken delight in military preparation; and was a monarch rejoicing in war.

3. One great feature which we notice in

him was his simple but yet profound reliance on God. The reference of everything to a particular Providence, and his continual remembrance of God in prayer and praise before and after his expeditions give a mark to his conduct. At the same time, though engaged so constantly in religious exercises and though referring everything immediately to God, he arranged matters for himself with the utmost care and plan, using all the means in his power to benefit the people and to secure their well-being and happiness by establishing judicial and ecclesiastical courts, and by sending forth missions to instruct them in the ways of God. Besides this he paid great attention to the efficiency of the army and the building of ships for commercial purposes. All these acts show him to have been a person keenly alive to the necessity of exercising the powers with which God had gifted him.

Of his power then there can be no doubt ; but the remarkable thing is, to find, connected with this power, so much simplicity of character, and so much almost childlike religion, without any of that reserve which men of considerable energies are so wont to use. There is for instance, something singular in his im-

mediate appeal to Ahab to send for a prophet of the LORD, before he would dare to go down to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, and his intuitive perception of the unreality of those prophets whom Ahab had collected. There are very few among the conquerors of the great kings of the earth, who, when surrounded by the pomp and glory of their martial preparations, would have boldly mentioned their resolve to appeal to the prophet of the LORD. Then too his earnest desire to instruct the people; his sending to them an especial minister of God; and his return from his last great conquest in the midst of heavenly psalmody, floating above the stormy music of the battle, are indications of a religious mind, exceedingly simple and childlike, and unspoilt by the possession of great powers. At the same time his faults partook of something of the same character. The unwillingness to offend others, and the wish to cement friendships and alliances with the powerful around him, even though they were wicked, are the properties of a mind that is, to a certain degree, simple and childlike.

4. The religion of most persons of great power and position—such as those possessed

by Jehoshaphat—is usually reserved, and anything but simple and childlike. Such men philosophize on truths which we have ever received almost without examining into their philosophic history, and attribute to the most far-off and far-fetched sources rules and impulses which we have found to be the most simple. They disappoint us, and make us doubt of the soundness of our position. They would break up the fair and beautiful images which hover over the land and aim of our hopes, or draw down a veil of impenetrable mist over the morning of our future. The world is divided very much into two classes with regard to these two views of the things of God.

The history of the difference of these two kinds of men is based on the great variety of their characters—the one is subjective, the other objective. The subjective character, when viewed in this light, is one to a certain degree conscious of all the great acts which it performs, perceives the motive springs of those energies which influence or alarm mankind, and itself puts in motion the wheels which work the entire machinery of the character. Consequently the religious energy has

to be adjusted and arranged by the same conscious will which directs the other tendencies of the character. The result of this is, that religion in such persons has to bear a certain relationship and often subordination to the other portions of the character and the life. It is no longer a natural impulse ; no longer an external law implicitly obeyed ; no longer a guide followed without inquiry. One demand of religion is too exacting, another too simple, a third too transcendental, to be consistent with certain bold and unscrupulous courses of action. They must, therefore, be explained away, obeyed under protest, and believed in under reserve. They must be toned down to become consistent with the rest of the character, and be brought into subordination to the general whole. All this ends in a religion formed to suit a certain condition and intention of mind.

There is, however, another class of men to which properly Jehoshaphat belongs, to whom the great energies of genius and the lustre of position are alike as independent of their own energy, as separate from their own consciousness : they are what they are by accident, not intention ; they receive their gifts, and are

grateful for their circumstances, but they are no more aware of them than was the lawgiver of the glory that beamed from his countenance. They have genius, or intellect, or originality, or vigorous conception, or untiring energy, or exhaustless perseverance ; but they follow each one of these as impulses, on which they act no more consciously than the child who follows the dictates of its nature to love its parent, or to crave for its toy. To such men also religion is an instinct, and impulse leading to an external law, which the mind seems bound to obey with the same implicit confidence with which it accepts the capacities of disposition or the circumstances of life. There is no attempt to amalgamate the religious element with the other elements of the character.

Such may account for the apparently unusual features of the character of Jehoshaphat ; the combination of splendid military powers, and vast advantage of circumstance with the religion of a child. In ancient days such a man was Cyrus—calmly philosophizing at the head of an invading army, pausing to question Croesus at his funeral pyre, and obeying the dictate of Heaven to release the captive Jew.

The characters which might be seen best in contrast with this would be that of Oliver Cromwell, or Charles V. of Spain, who conscious of the religious element in their characters, compelled it with more or less sincerity to occupy the position of a portion of the general whole. So in ordinary life we frequently meet with the man exact in the management of business, and severe in his requirements of others, profound in his calculations, and rigid in punctilio, who, nevertheless, when met in connection with his religious duties is simple, easy, considerate and kind, trustful as a child, and adorned with humility. We are surprised, for we expected otherwise: the knit brow, the absorbed attention, the profound calculations, the intricate pursuit of well-adjusted schemes, the respect or the awe felt for him by others through the week or through the day had led us to expect the same sort of character when we met him on the ground of religion. But it is otherwise. It is manifest that one great practical lesson is deducible from these reflections, namely, that we never shall get into the habit of judging of the spiritual condition of men from their appearance in their earthly calling, or in the

indications of their public character. God may be working with them in a line separate from both of these. Cyrus may be listening with attentive ear to the voice from Heaven, while he appears to be absorbed in the invasion of Babylon, or the conquest of Lydia. If a man seem to be severe and rigid in the line of his earthly calling, proud, imperious, self-confident, or exacting, we may find that none of these affect him in his religious sympathies. Ay, though he be the ally of Ahab, the conqueror of Ammon and Moab, returning decked with the jewels of the East, the controller of the gold of Ophir, and the lofty descendant of a line of kings; such a man may, nevertheless, be humbly waiting on the LORD, and refusing to take any step without reference to His Word and Will by prayer.

Nevertheless it is of course true, that such men may err in separating too widely their religious and public characters. The Prophet may have to rebuke Jehoshaphat for his alliance with the wicked, and the convictions or the chastisements of God may be necessary to remind many amongst us of the danger of not making religion the subject-matter of our life.

The leading features of the character of Jehoshaphat, then, are the following:—A tender and child-like faith and reliance on God; a keen view of the magnificent and noble, in things to do with this life; an over-wrought regard for the importance of the support of man in his various designs, which led him to seek or fall in with the society of the powerful—however wicked; and accompanying this, a certain diffidence about the bold extirpation of evil, since the groves were not cut down. All this was combined with a very high administrative power of government, which led him to increase his army, and to establish new courts of judicature. On the whole he was a man full of plan, lofty conception, and vigorous execution in things to do with this world. He must therefore be considered as representing that class of men who, while they are child-like and simple-minded in their faith, show an extraordinary contradiction to all this in a life that is elaborate, planned, and scheming. In the history of the world and our daily walks in life we frequently come across such people, who perplex us by the apparent contradictions of their two natures—the one manifesting itself in relation to the soul, the other to ex-

ternal circumstances. Such characters especially show forth the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove. It shall be my object therefore not only to suggest the reasons why these apparent contradictions appear in the same character, but also to show the importance of such men in the great society of the world.

5. I have already adverted to several lives in the Old Testament as resembling this kind of type—Joseph and Daniel, David and Moses in his early life. The connection of the simple and child-like spirit in religion with the more careful one in the things of this world is by no means so uncommon an occurrence as not to be verified by our daily intercourse with society. The two do co-exist in a very singular manner. The men whose shrewdness is proverbial in the mart or in the scenes of public barter are often remarkable for the purity and simplicity of their religious life.

Men in great power who have influenced the world in different stages of its history, or who have pursued paths more or less illustrious, are divided thus into two classes,—there are those who with vast ability, knowledge of life, insight into character, tact, and so forth, combine a

sceptical mind with regard to religion, or, if not positively sceptical, one that is inclined so to mistrust the operations of the invisible world, as to destroy in themselves the simplicity of faith, the earnestness of zeal, and the purity of love; while on the other hand there are a few—who combine with all these above-mentioned characteristics, the most child-like simplicity of faith, humble estimation of themselves in the sight of God and eminent holiness of practical life. These are by far the rarer characters, since men who influence the world and their age by their powers, are usually of that description to which I referred above.

To the smaller of these classes Jehoshaphat belongs, and with him some of those eminent servants of God whose lives are recorded in the Bible. That Jehoshaphat had the powers I have just spoken of there can be no doubt. He was anything but an unworldly character. His administrative powers were great and would rank him with Moses the lawgiver, and with some of those who have deserved the name of philosophers for the just estimate they formed of mankind. His establishment of the great judicial assembly at Jerusalem; the singular mission that he sent for the instruction of religion;

his management of those who gathered round his court—show him to have been a man of great worldly wisdom.

Then, again, his personal courage was undoubted in that last magnificent expedition of his against Moab and Ammon, when he returned, crowned with victory at the head of his triumphant host; while his daring to go to Ramoth-Gilead, and to enter the battle while Ahab shrunk in disguise from imminent death—show him to have been a man of some courage.

Again, he seems to have been a man of undoubted taste for what is beautiful. His love for music and the way he used it in his service of thanksgiving to God—will class him very much with David and Solomon. At the same time there was a slight tendency to a lack of moral courage. This was shown on more occasions than one. His desire to join the expedition of ships, even though the character of Ahaziah, with whom he wished to form an alliance, was bad. And this led him, as it did Hezekiah afterwards, into positive fault. He deserved the rebuke of the prophet for his alliance, and the occasion of his meeting Ahab before the battle of Ramoth-Gilead was more

than doubtful. These traits in his character show him to have been open to much the same kind of infirmity as Hezekiah was afterwards.

The practical bearing of this study is, that there are many in whom the possession and exercise of great powers, which are usually called worldly, are not by any means inconsistent with the most humble and sincere piety. With reference to such our judgment must indeed be suspended, and we must learn to believe, however hard it may be, that the harmlessness of the dove may co-exist with the wisdom of the serpent.

LXII.

UZZIAH.

FAMILIARITY WITH RELIGIOUS THINGS.

2 KINGS XV. 5.

"THE LORD SMOTE THE KING, SO THAT HE WAS A LEPER UNTO THE DAY OF HIS DEATH, AND DWELT IN A SEVERAL HOUSE. AND JOTHAM THE KING'S SON WAS OVER THE HOUSE, JUDGING THE PEOPLE OF THE LAND."

1. THE character and conduct of King Uzziah are very full of instruction. His life is most fully described in the Book of Chronicles. He was sixteen years old when he began to reign; his reign was long, lasting fifty-two years, and we are told he did what was right in the sight of the LORD. Nevertheless, his life was marked by one fault and by one signal act of punishment from God. His fault was the offering sacrifice, that which only the priest might do; and his punishment a leprosy, inflicted on him

by the word of a priest on his persevering in his fault. This is the more remarkable as he is on the whole described as a good character. One notable circumstance is, that in the Book of Kings he goes by the name of Azariah, and is there also described as a good king, and all that we are told is that he died a leper, having dwelt in a several house until the day of his death. The acts of his reign on which God seems to have set His approval, are the following. He made constant reference to Zachariah the prophet, and we are told, as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper. He made war on Philistia and prospered. Again, we are told that God helped him against the Philistines and against the Arabians. Having come back, he built towers in the desert, and he had much cattle: It appears that in his campaigns he won a high name for courage. He transgressed against God by going into the temple and offering incense on the altar. The priest went in after him with fourscore other priests—all valiant men; and they withstood Uzziah, saying, "It appertaineth not to thee, O Uzziah, to burn it."

Uzziah, having a censer in his hand, was wroth; and while angry holding the censer

in his hand, the leprosy rose up into his forehead, and the priests thrust him forcibly out ; and he himself hasted to go out because the LORD had smitten him. The rest of the acts of Uzziah are written in the Book of Kings. But there mention is made of the leprosy, but not of the cause which led to it ; and on this point of discrepancy I will first speak.

2. It seems clear that Uzziah was a man whose life throughout, until the finishing act of it, was in conformity to God's will, and blessed with God's mercy. That crowning act of his life—the offering the incense, we are told, was the result of a presumptuous spirit brought on by the success of his life. But while this cause is assigned for the fault and the fault is mentioned to explain the punishment in the Book of Chronicles, in the Book of Kings the punishment only is mentioned ; and we are simply told that the LORD smote the king till he was a leper ; and that he dwelt in a several house ; so that any one reading the account in this Book, without referring to Chronicles, would be in the dark as to the motive of the ALMIGHTY in afflicting the king. We must refer to one portion of God's counsels to understand the other. The light shed from one page of His will, will

irradiate and explain that which hitherto may have appeared to be obscure ; and how often is this the case in daily life ! An occurrence takes place, illness or affliction of the body, a heavy domestic calamity, a shock given to the security of the estate, and we see no reason for it at the time, nay, we think we see every reason against it ! The life of the man who is afflicted has been, hitherto, apparently unimpeachable ; then why does God afflict him ? a reference to the other portions of God's counsels would tell us perhaps, that the heart had been lifted up owing to success, and that God Who knew the heart, has punished the fault. In ordinary life we read but the Book of Kings, in heaven is revealed the Book of Chronicles. Or we are inclined to wonder at the suddenness of the trouble, and complain of the apparent inequality of God's dealings ; whereas, we have not seen nor known of the long provocations which the sufferer may have given to God. Or we marvel at the apparent want of aptness in the particular trouble,—why should the prosperous and successful king be stained with leprosy ? and why should the man who had been for so many years so singularly under the sun-

shine of God's love, be compelled to go down to so dishonoured a grave? why should one whose life had been so harmless, be visited with so heavy a calamity; while others who seem to have erred much more against God and their neighbour, have "not bands in their death but are lusty and strong?" The questions may not be answered by the ordinary volume of God's revealed will, in which the chapters of human circumstances are contained; but they are fully explained in that other volume which reveals the connection of the rebellious heart and the chastened life.

Such is the relation between the Books of Chronicles and Kings, in the lives of many of those who are described in both of them, especially in the case of King Uzziah. The Book of Kings tells us that the Lord smote the king that he became a leper; the Book of Chronicles tells us that when Uzziah was strong, he transgressed against God, and "the leprosy rose up in his forehead," and the priest thrust him out of the temple; yea, himself hasted to go out because the Lord had "smitten him."

The eye of God is often resting in secret on the inmost heart of those who to the world's

eye appear like whited sepulchres, fair and honest, kind and generous ; but He sees the motives which exist inwardly and secretly, without giving us the means of knowing the motive or interior history. He inflicts the punishment, and we stand astonished.

3. And this leads us to consider that particular form of sin in King Uzziah which called out the vengeance of God, and which developed itself into so singular an act, and one, at first sight, so little in keeping with the former portions of his life. His early career was one of a good and religious man, blessed by God with prosperity on that account. Trusting to his success as a sign not only of God's favour, but of his own moral security, he became inflated with pride and self-sufficiency, and his temptation was to fall into that very sin, so natural to those who, having once been earnest or sincere in their religion, have by degrees familiarized themselves with it, so that they think they may play with it as a bauble, or use its influence to serve their own ends, and, like Uzziah, thrust themselves into the very office of the priest, by a profane and irreverent handling of holy things. This familiarity with the things of religion is the natural result of that precocity of spiritual

knowledge which belongs to many. It ends in more than one false condition of mind. Familiarity itself quickly shades off into irreverence, pride and self-sufficiency, and independence of those means of grace and elevated helps to the religious life which are so inseparably mixed up with the life of the earnest Christian. Into these faults Uzziah fell. A disposition of independence, which he seems to have been, would naturally lead him to think very much for himself in things religious ; and thinking for himself would naturally lead him to too subjective a view of religion generally.

This spirit we sometimes see at work in those who, when young, are at all objects of mark to those that know them ; they will frequently undervalue external means and laws which surround them in the Church. Uzziah's sacrifice at the altar showed the progress of this kind of fault in his heart. His persisting, after the exhortation of the priests, showed a proud and contumacious spirit, refusing to bend to the external laws of God ; and the fact of his doing it at all showed how he had come to undervalue the priesthood and its essential functions. The act of Azariah with the other priests, in driving him out of the

temple, is remarkable and courageous; but still more remarkable and terrible is the rapid punishment with which the king was visited through the instrumentality of that very priesthood which he had despised, and he, who had so proudly lifted up his head in the house of God, was compelled to sojourn an outcast and a leper in a separate house outside the city walls during his declining years; while his son acted in his place as king of the Jews. This warning speaks with force to those who have had a long successful, and apparently religious life. Their tendency will often be in the same direction as that of Uzziah, to a familiarity which may lead them to a contempt of God's ordinances; to a pride, which may lead them to an over wrought trust in their own feelings, to an independence of God's grace, and lastly, and consequently, to a contempt for God's Church.

4. There are many forms which this particular error takes that come before our eye,—that familiarity with holy things and holy names which so mark those schools of dissent from the Church, which look upon reserve with the same eye as they look on hypocrisy, and on reverence, with the same feeling with which

they regard superstition. Many sad conditions result from this so great a familiarity of treatment of the external objects of religion, that, by degrees, such men lose sight of objective religion altogether, and blend it into themselves. In the realms of faith where the shadowy forms which pass before the mind's eye are matters of apprehension more to the mind than to the sense, there is ever a danger of our ignoring the separate existence of those forms, making them after all but the idols of our own creation. The attitude necessary towards those objects is one of reverence and reserved delicacy. The forms of the unseen world are in themselves to our eye infinitely fine; the rude touch, the over-curious gaze may dissipate them as far as our perception of them goes. So the schools to which I referred just now, have dealt with the Second blessed Person of the TRINITY, till they have denied His Divinity, and with the HOLY SPIRIT until they have denied His Personality. With an unauthorized touch they have entered the holiest place, and dared to intrude upon scenes for which they have neither warrant nor commission. Another end in which this kind of spirit results is, very naturally, pride and self-sufficiency. In propor-

tion as we melt off the outlines of the objects of our creed, we lower our estimation of them ; and in proportion as they are made parts only of our own interior self, we by degrees find nothing on which we can place reliance, save on our own opinion or personal energy.

It is to this condition of mind that our familiarity with religious subjects will judicially bring us, and those whose intentions were best, may in this life have to bewail Uzziah's end.

LXIII.

DEBORAH.

WOMAN'S ATTRIBUTE.

JUDGES IV. 4.

"AND DEBORAH, A PROPHETESS, THE WIFE OF LAPIDOTH, SHE JUDGED ISRAEL AT THAT TIME."

1. AMONGST the women of the Bible Deborah stands out in great prominence, though we know but little of her character. She rose one of those bright stars of hope in the day of Jewish calamity, to which the eyes of a nation were directed for guidance and illumination. But there are others gathered round her possessing many similar features. She is one of those who show forth a distinctive characteristic of women—the power of contrivance and design carried out to such an extent as to make some doubt whether her acts were within the limits of religion and morality ;

but when we see how highly those are spoken of in Holy Scripture who made use of this power for the glory of God and the good of His Church, we cannot believe that its exercise was essentially wrong. Such was Judith at the siege of Bethulia; such was Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite; such too were Sarah and Rebecca the wives of Abraham and Isaac, though they intrigued for their families while others intrigued for a nation; such too was Jezebel the wicked queen, and Athaliah the intriguing dowager; though of course these last two are represented in Holy Scripture as having simply used their disposition for the purposes of sin. It would be an interesting object to examine the history of this inclination, and to see what is its religious nature and aim.

2. Deborah lived under a palm tree near Mount Ephraim. She seems to have been a kind of oracle in the unsettled state of things that existed among the Jewish tribes; her advice was attended to and her voice followed by leaders and by armies with the most implicit devotion. She traversed the wild districts of the land in security, protected by the reverence which was felt for her genius and judgment.

The children of Israel were sold into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan, the captain of whose host was Sisera, who had nine hundred chariots of iron. Deborah, beneath her palm tree, mused on the captivity of her people and the tyrannical oppression which kept them down, for they had been under the iron rule of Jabin for twenty years. She took the initiative in proclaiming rebellion against the despot and freedom to the captive. She sent for Barak, the son of Abinoam, and bade him blow the trumpet of deliverance ; but so strong was the trust in Deborah's personal influence that Barak refused to go, unless Deborah would go with him. She consented and went with him, and they came to Kedesh, and there Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali together.

He went on, and ten thousand men at his feet, but Deborah was ever with him. And she said to Barak, " Up ; for this is the day that the LORD has delivered Sisera into thy hands ; " they went to Tabor, and Deborah was with him still ; they met with Sisera and put him to the rout. The result of this victory was of the greatest national importance to the Jews ; Deborah, to whom the victory was so largely owing burst into a magnificent song of triumph, which

is one of the finest specimens of Hebrew poetry we possess, and in which the prophetess is frequently referred to as the leading genius of Israel. Her parallels are many, both in Scripture and history. We are irresistibly reminded of one whose spirit once bore up the flagging energies of France in the annals of the latter, of Judith in those of the former.

One circumstance strikes us as highly significant. Starting up close beside her was the kindred spirit of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. Heber the Kenite was a descendant of Moses' father-in-law, and sojourned on the borders of the Holy Land; thereby having a sort of connection with the children of Israel. He dwelt in a tent on the plain of Zaanaim; his wife was Jael. He seems to have been at peace with Jabin, the enemy of the Jews at this time; nevertheless, Jael felt herself warranted in receiving Sisera into her tent, under the pretence of giving him food and shelter; and, as he lay there sleeping, she struck the nail of the tent into his temples, and he died; for which act she is spoken of approvingly in Holy Scripture. "Blessed among women shall Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, be; blessed above women in the tent shall she be." Such is the position

and character of Deborah. Though not strictly answerable for the act of Jael, she, nevertheless, celebrated that act as one of her objects of gratulation in her magnificent hymn.

3. We must view her in two lights. She was of course under a heavenly inspiration as well as under the guidance of a strong natural character. In the former capacity she is simply to be viewed as one of those instances in which God chooses to show forth His power through the weak things of this world, and to bring about great national crises through the instrumentality of the weaker sex. But placing this view of the subject for a moment aside, I will consider her in reference to her natural character and ordinary position, as a woman in the midst of vast and depressing circumstances rousing by the vigour, boldness, and freshness of her character, the flagging energies of men. This is the province of a woman, partaking as it often does of the character of enthusiasm and exaggeration as was somewhat the case with Deborah. All had resort to her wisdom ; all were emboldened to enter battle against desperate odds, if she were present ; and all seemed to hang, in the hour of extreme difficulty, upon the slightest word that fell from her lips. When

woman is permitted to come out on these remarkable occasions of life, one of her leading attributes will ever be that very promptitude and rapidity of decision which marked the character of the Israelitish prophetess.

However much man may excel in firmness of purpose, vigour of execution and calmness of decision, it is very rare that he is able to suggest the same apt remedies at a crisis, as woman when she happens to be called into play. We often see, (what seems at first sight a paradox,) women able to step for the moment out of their ordinary position, and become the directors instead of the followers of men. We are not to take these as exceptional cases, but as existing perfectly within the scope of God's ordinary arrangements. It is not only in great national troubles that this power is called forth; nor is it only in great political crises that this ingenuity is exercised, though many instances of this kind may be found. Such was that maid, who when France groaning beneath the rule of a king remarkable for his imbecility, was surrounded and threatened by foreign invaders, rose up the suggester of remedies, and the successful raiser of the siege of Orleans. Such was that other enthusiast,

who stained her soul with murder to rescue a beloved country from a tyrant; and though exercised for evil rather than for good, such is the imposing and truthful attitude of the queen, in the famous tragedy of our great dramatist, so forcibly reminding us of Jezebel—the suggester of plans to her weaker husband.

Another distinctive female trait brought out by the character of Deborah, is the power of arousing and encouraging man in the execution of his great enterprises; the power of bearing continuous suffering and of rising to the surface after repeated disappointment. Man is continually beaten down in his boldest designs from lack of that spirit, the possession of which makes woman so powerful a help meet for him.

We see this in many instances of life, public as well as private. How remarkable and almost miraculous it is that the wife, who shares the anxious cares of the husband, be he labourer or mechanic, is able to keep up her spirit and to hope to the end! How often would the man, who has had to contend with the waves of constant trouble, yield and succumb to increasing difficulties; and how many a crisis of difficulty, in connection with illness, accidents, or the like,

in the domestic circle, calls forth the presence of mind of the mother, when the father would shrink from the difficulty, and lend no hand to help.

Nor is it only this power that is felt so beneficially in the cottage as well as in richer homes. The eye that sees a brighter day and that pierces the fast rolling clouds of present adversity, perceiving the glow of a brighter morning when "the tyranny will be overpast," is especially the eye of woman. Many is the man, who convinced of the hopelessness of his undertaking, would have let the feeble knees droop, and the weary hand fall, were it not that in his tent dwelt a Deborah, to whose inspiring voice of consolation and encouragement he had resort when the storm of trouble gathered round him. Nor does woman's mission stop here. Deborah went to the battle; and Barak refused to go unless she went with him. Her voice of encouragement was not enough; he must have her presence too. There is a peculiar power, a softening influence in the *presence* of woman which enables man to finish what her encouraging advice had induced him to begin: and through life's onward passage to the grave, it often happens that year after year the toils of

thought and labour are cheered because shared by the presence of the partner of life. In how many cases have we known it true, that the death of the wife has immediately preceded the paralysis of genius, or of energy, because she no longer shared the enterprise. Every woman's mission is more or less similar to that of Deborah, and many may learn their life's lesson at the tent of the wife of Lapidoth.

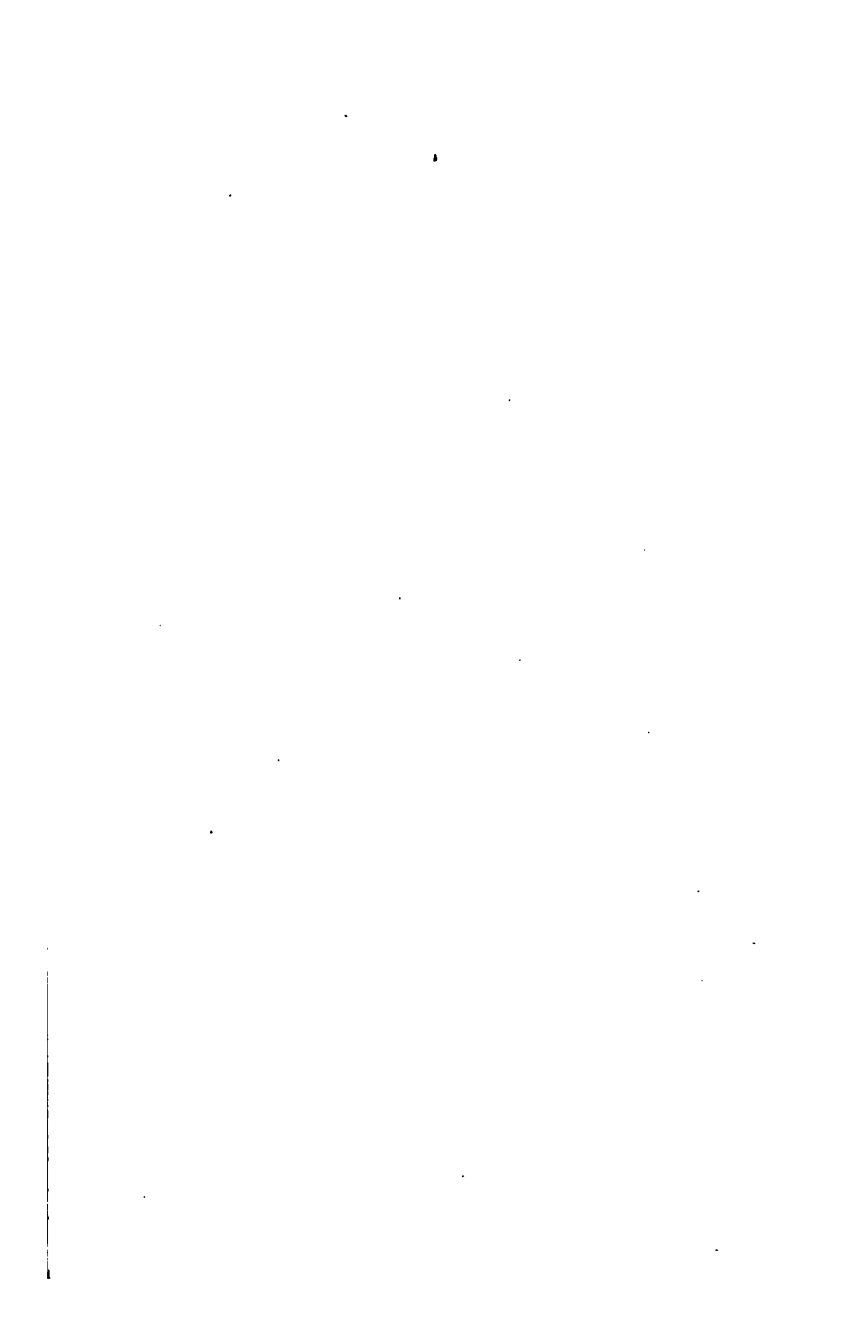
One other attribute of woman which comes out in Deborah's story is, the deep impression that her mission was divine, and that the instincts of nature were the gifts of inspiration. There is that spirit in the weaker sex, which, in the moment of high crisis and difficulty would often justify the impression; but this spirit is the gift of God for a special purpose and is a substitute for those bolder and more persevering qualities which belong to the stronger sex. There are many periods, both in private and in public life, which need rather light shed by a ready and present mind, than the steady beam of the more enduring fire. From the lack of it we may miss the object of our life's search. It is the want felt in such conjunctures as these that woman sup-

plies ; she bears the lamp of the midnight ; and sometimes when with weary watching other lamps have gone out, her's is trimmed.

In the moment of national disaster, Barak trusted more to Deborah than to chariots of iron. The tent of Lapidoth was to him a surer refuge than the pavilions of the tribes, and the counsel of a single woman's voice, sufficient to hush the portentous threatenings of the sons of Anak. So has it often been. The love of Esther shone like a gentle star, when all other lights had failed, on the midnight horizon of the Jewish people, and saved them from ruin when all seemed lost ; the affection of Michal suggested on the instant the remedy which might save David, and the energy of Abigail averted from the family of the churlish Nabal the wrath of the warriors of the wilderness. In their last extremity, the inhabitants of Bethulia committed the conduct of the vessel of their state, to the successful guidance of Judith, and more than one page which records the annals of profane history contains the story of the sagacity or the heroism of woman. So also many a private home could tell the tale of the long hours of pressing poverty or illness, remedied by the cheering voice or the unbroken

spirit of her whose value was never known until all other hopes had failed ; and the same homes could bear witness to the solution of grave difficulties at the last moment by the ingenuity of the mother and the wife.

4. Such is woman's prerogative ; such her peculiar characteristic. For though Deborah may be an exaggeration in a remarkable crisis of the characteristics of her sex, they nevertheless exist in more or less force in every representative of it. It is seemingly paradoxical, but no less true, that women should have the power of meeting imminent danger with a calmness and perseverance often denied to man. Let them view these gifts as the direct ordering of Heaven, and, while they glory in them as their heritage, let them cultivate and improve them as the talents committed to their trust. The song of triumph—sung by the prophetess—is brilliant with sagacity and knowledge ; and no unfit likeness of that which might be sung by thousands who, perhaps placed in less eminent positions, have nevertheless achieved equally glorious results.



LXIV.

JEROBOAM.

THE CHURCH SACRIFICED TO THE WORLD.

1 KINGS XIII. 33, 34.

“ AFTER THIS THING JEROBOAM RETURNED NOT FROM HIS EVIL WAY, BUT MADE AGAIN OF THE LOWEST OF THE PEOPLE PRIESTS OF THE HIGH PLACES; WHOSOEVER WOULD, HE CONSECRATED HIM, AND HE BECAME ONE OF THE PRIESTS OF THE HIGH PLACES. AND THIS THING BECAME SIN UNTO THE HOUSE OF JEROBOAM, EVEN TO CUT IT OFF, AND TO DESTROY IT FROM OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH.”

1. JEROBOAM is put forward in a singularly awful aspect in Holy Scripture. He is not only described as himself a wicked man ; but especially as making others to sin with him. For this is evidently intended to be brought prominently forward, inasmuch as the addition to the mention of the name, almost always is, he “ who made Israel to sin.” As if to sin were terrible enough, and to die in sin exceeding awful, but to be pursued in the world of spirits by the

shades of those who are ever and anon added to the number and whom we have helped to everlasting ruin is dreadful beyond comparison.

2. But the features of Jeroboam's case are so melancholy, that they are worth consideration by all people who would think of God's ways with mankind. It must arrest the attention even of a child, that this bad man was in a very special way chosen of God and appointed to his high office by the prophet himself, so that we are struck with awe at the thought that one who could act so daringly, might be able to say during his dark career from time to time, deceiving others and deceiving himself, "I was specially called of God ; was placed in my present position by Him. I did not seek it—I have on me the print of holy hands, and carry with me the authority of the divine commission, therefore can I be a reprobate? or an outcast from God's favour?" The apology might have seemed plausible for Jeroboam, nevertheless it was unavailing ; for his receding spirit, as it passed from his connection with his earthly estate, was ever pursued and will be till time be no more, with the now well-known declaration, that "he was the man who made Israel to sin."

3. When Jeroboam is first mentioned, he is spoken of as a man of mighty valour in the reign of Solomon, being the son of Nebat an Ephrathite, Solomon's servant, and his mother's name was Zeruah, a widow woman. It seems that he early entertained the idea of conspiring against the king, impelled by an interview he had with Abijah the Prophet, when he was walking one day from Jerusalem. At this time he held a high place in Solomon's household, being ruler over the house of Joseph, and very industrious. The prophet in the interview made the following announcement :—

“And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces : for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee : (But he shall have one tribe for My servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel :) Because that they have forsaken Me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways, to do that which is right in Mine eyes, and to keep My statutes and My judg-

ments, as did David his father. Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand : but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David My servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept My commandments and My statutes : But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes. And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David My servant may have a light alway before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen Me to put My name there. And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel. And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in My ways, and do that is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as David My servant did ; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee. And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever."

This statement was accompanied by the rending of the young man's new garment into ten pieces, an act symbolical of the rent kingdom and the number of its divisions. Solomon, who seems to have heard of this, became natu-

rally suspicious, and as we should gather, was aroused to vigilance, by a conspiracy actually entered upon by Jeroboam, so that Jeroboam was compelled to flee from Jerusalem, and took refuge with Shishak King of Egypt.

At the death of Solomon Jeroboam returned, headed the political reformers, and urged Rehoboam to ease the severe and rigorous rule of Solomon. The weak son of the wise king refused, and Jeroboam from a remonstrator became a conspirator, and the violent hand of rebellion wrested from the descendant of David ten parts of his kingdom. Jeroboam became at once the centre of a powerful faction. War broke out, and its first act was one of violation of justice on the side of the conspirators. Adoram, who was sent to mediate as an ambassador, was slain. Jeroboam became universally successful. Shemaiah the prophet forbade any armed resistance on the part of Rehoboam, saying that "the thing was from God." And the government of the Holy Land became stereotyped in the twofold form.

Up to this point the act of sin, which is so terrible in Jeroboam, is his seizing what God had promised ; in contrast with David, who, having been clearly told that the kingdom of

Saul should be his, so far from laying any violent hands on it or its occupier, shrunk with religious dread from even touching him, and slew the Amalekite who had slain Saul.

But one false step quickly led to another. Once king he calmly planned the alteration of the established religion. Having anticipated God's arrangements, he went on to take the ministration into his own hands, and said "in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David, and they will kill me. So he made two calves, and set them up at Dan and Bethel. And he said, These be thy Gods, O Israel, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt:" thereby gratuitously falsifying the very terms of the Law of Moses, "I am the LORD thy God, Which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and the house of bondage."

He then made the excuse, that it was "too much" for them to go up to Jerusalem to worship. He made a house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi; thereby not only departing from the established tribe, and the regular appointed line and order, but also casting the greatest discredit on the sacred

office, and making the priesthood despised in the eyes of the people.

He then ordained a feast on his own authority in the eighth month, like the feast in Judah, and offered on the altar. So he did also in Bethel, and he himself sacrificed "to the calves." As to this feast the sacred historian especially speaks of it, as "the feast which he had devised of his own heart."

Having perpetrated all this wickedness, which was evidently great, he was visited and warned by the Prophet of Bethel.

Having stayed long in Egypt, and the calf being the object of its adoration, he had probably borrowed his notion of the calves from the worship of that country. It is probable that he placed up these objects to affect the worshipper of JEHOVAH, and not to meet the wishes of an idolatrous people, for it was to counteract the desire which the people had to go up to Jerusalem to worship, and consequently addressed itself to a desire in the people to preserve their fealty to Heaven.

The visit to Jerusalem must of necessity have considerably injured the security of Jeroboam's throne. This would appear a reason for his making "priests of the lowest of the

people," referring, as the expression does, to the circumstance that he made those who were not of the tribe of Levi; since the whole tribe of Levi remained faithful to the house of David, and the true worship at Jerusalem. One false step led to another, and the devices of evil followed each other in quick and natural succession. His appointment of a feast was strictly the change of the Feast of Tabernacles from the fifteenth day of the tenth to the fifteenth of the eighth month. The magnitude of his fault must have been considerable. Never before had any one ventured to combine the regal and priestly offices so boldly and unhesitatingly, except in the case of Saul when he was signally reprov'd. The sinful practice once introduced and adopted, it became an opportunity of sin in after days; for we are expressly told that other kings followed in his steps, doing the same things as Jeroboam, "who made Israel to sin." Such was his sin; one which not only rested with terrible power on himself, but clung with sad pertinacity to his successors.

On the occasion of the visit of the warning Prophet, it appears that affected by his punishment the wicked king recognized the avenging

power of God, for he entreated the Prophet to intercede for his recovery, which he did, and his withered hand was restored. After this Abijah, the son of Jeroboam, fell sick, and the king, partly from a sense of the power of God, partly from the recollection of his early interview with Ahijah the Prophet, sent to inquire of the latter. But he was evidently conscience-stricken on the occasion, as he bade his wife go disguised to the Prophet, dreading the answer of a man who once took so conspicuous a part as his friend and supporter, and whose sense of right and duty he well knew he had violated.

The blind Prophet knew the advancing footsteps of Jeroboam's wife, and he broke in upon her as she entered with the message of God, denouncing the king's wickedness, and comparing and contrasting his conduct with that of David, at one period placed in so similar circumstances.

“ Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over My people Israel, and rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and yet thou hast not been as My ser-

vant David, who kept My commandments, and who followed Me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in Mine eyes ; but hast done evil above all that were before thee : for thou hast gone and made thee other Gods, and molten images, to provoke Me to anger, and hast cast Me behind thy back : therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone. Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city shall the dogs eat ; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat : for the LORD hath spoken it. Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine own house : and when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die. And all Israel shall mourn for him, and bury him : for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam. Moreover the LORD shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day : but what ? even now. For the LORD shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and He shall

root up Israel out of this good land, which He gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking the LORD to anger. And He shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin."

The prophecy was verified, for as the wife of the king came to the threshold of the house the child died. We are told that this son of the king should be mourned for and buried, because in him was "found some good thing." The Jews' traditions tell us, that this "good thing" was that he remonstrated with his father against the erection of the golden calves; and that he strongly dissuaded him from placing sentinels at the borders to hinder the people going up from Samaria to the three annual feasts at Jerusalem, a thing which he strove to do if he could, owing to the hold which the holy custom of other days had upon them. There is something exceedingly touching about the mention of this son of Jeroboam; inasmuch as the infliction of an untimely death is not thought inconsistent with a state of freedom from punishment and impunity. Release from a scene of so much temptation and so much

wickedness as that was which surrounded the court and policy of Samaria, must have been in itself a blessing for the prince.

4. The sin of Jeroboam is manifold and complicated ; nevertheless, one leading principle underlies and impels it throughout. He was an unbeliever in the *reality* of religion. He looked on it only in the light of a machine, to be dispensed with and altered at his own choice and according to the rules of worldly expediency. Nevertheless, he had a lurking conviction of some dim reality behind the mists of these secondary principles, to which he bent in homage, and whose real influence over human circumstances and moral actions he could not but believe.

In him we find that strange contradiction which we see in so many in various degrees around us,—the apparently real trust and belief in a substratum of religion and faith while the course of life each day belies the idea. So we have read of more than one celebrated philosopher of the eighteenth century who showed at dying a belief in a creed which the writings and conventions of life had belied, and more than one poet of our own, who was scared by forms in the last agony, which

throughout life he had declared to believe to be but phantoms of the brain. So we meet men in our daily walk who assail or scoff at the creed which when they approach death, they prefer adhering to by conforming their last acts and words to the requirements of its teaching and the stringency of its limitations. This condition of mind is singular, and at first sight incomprehensible.

The great parallel to Jeroboam in Scripture is Jehu. He, too, first called by God, rushed impetuously into the conflict with the family of Ahab; and like the son of Nebat, quickly transcended the limits of the Divine permission, and sought self when he professed to be obeying God and furthering the designs of the kingdom; himself ending in defending the same idolatry which Ahab had encouraged, and making the plans and arrangements of God merely opportunities for his own aggrandizement and promotion in life. But Jehu did not go so far as Jeroboam, nor venture openly to derange the whole plan of religious ministration in the Church to serve his own ends. The great contrast to Jehu in all respects is David: while a boy singled out for the kingdom alike by the choice of Samuel, the

victory over Goliath and the adulation of the women of Israel. He never touched the crown which glittered before him as his own, nor aimed even in thought at the kingdom over which nevertheless he was to rule for a long life, and on whose throne he was to found a dynasty. He spared Saul in the cave, and roused his lagging sentinels in the tent. He remonstrated with his persecutor, and slew him who slew the king at Mount Gilboa, and when at last he was king, and entered on the position into which God led him by His own Hand, his first object was the order of the Church of God, while the proclamation of His Will became the aim of his daily life. The Psalms are his memorial, more brilliantly so than his legislation, and the memory of the Psalmist of Israel has paled to the eye of history the remaining lustre of his reign. His conduct was the result of a clear and living faith, which became the motive impulse of every act, and lay outspread like the clear surface of the pavement beneath the onward stream of daily life. He really believed. His faith was no line adopted to serve an ulterior end, or to please a faction. It was the principle of his life, the motive of his acts, and the firm persuasion of

his inmost soul. "I believed, and therefore have I spoken."

The character in common life which resembles Jeroboam is that of the man who considers the limit and boundary lines of religion to be shifting at the will of man, and its requirements simply dependent on the convenience of the arrangements of the world. He is one to whom faith is but opinion, and truth but convenience. There are many shapes of this error. It is often very subtle. The worst form appears in a case like Jeroboam ; but this almost requires the difficulties and temptations of public position to call it out. The ordinary pathway of life scarcely gives scope for so much open defiance to God's law and will.

5. The source of the error is important. It resides in the belief that truth is shifting, subjective,—not dogmatic,—not rigid. That it is what a man thinks it, and what will suit the circumstances of man and society. Whether the Temple or the altar at Dan were the seat of worship and resort of worshippers ; whether the Aaronical priest or the refuse of an unconsecrated population officiated at the sacrifice ; whether the holy associations consecrated by the institutions of David, or new

ideas suggested by the diplomacy of Jeroboam, it mattered little. God was served, religion was not given up; popular prejudice and ancestral prestige were gratified, and the kingdom was firmly established to the family of Nebat.

a. One phase of this character is that of the public man who deliberately and consciously recognizes no external law as governing himself in guiding the affairs of the state, or as ruling the direction of the civil government itself, except such a system of religion as may suit the exigencies of the times and the policy of parties. At first these lines may be pursued with something like adhesion to the belief in an external religion, and may simply assume the appearance of a clever, though necessary, adaptation of religion to the circumstances of the day, saving the character of the politician as a Christian. But, by degrees, this ground must be shifted, and the religion itself become what those of old were, only national religious systems, which receive their shape, form, and course from the needs and exigencies of public affairs, as sails receive their form from the wind which swells and impels them. This point can only be reached by the abrogation of the doctrine of a visible Church speaking dogmatically

(if indeed she can be viewed in such case as a form of Christianity at all) whose tenets must be held, whether they agree with political expediency or not.

It is a question of high and awful import, whether or not we are drifting in that direction, and whether the subordination which the Church, to say nothing of Christianity, is undergoing to the State, is not bidding fair to erase, by degrees, the very character of Christianity among us? Sacraments and rites, modes of worship and recognition of Divine Providence, as though CHRIST were really directing the affairs of man, have already been all but proclaimed by some as idle superstitions and indifferent opinions suggested or enacted by the narrowness of early ages, to be repealed by a court of law in the nineteenth century.

Jehu did not venture to do this; he used religion, but he did not supersede it. He formed its instruments, and applied them to his own work, but he did not attempt to cripple or recast them; nay, more, he made a boast of his "zeal for the LORD," and showed that zeal by falling in with the recognized worship. Jeroboam reconstructed the whole theory of religion to suit his own ends; and, far from

making a boast of, ignored "zeal for the Lord." Consequently, Jehu and Jeroboam divide between them statesmen and politicians: those who use religion, as an instrument to ends; and those who, casting it into a furnace, reproduce it fused into the forms of human society.

b. But, again, those are like Jeroboam, who, in humbler paths of life, insist on bursting through the barriers and limits of Christianity; and, more than that, impose new limits to suit any line they mean to pursue, or any opinions they desire to adopt. If the theory of the Church brings in its wake penitence or the life of discipline, with such men the theory of the Church must be the theory of Antichrist. If the Creed have condemnatory clauses which violate their ideas of charity, they must be expunged, or the Creed omitted. If the Gospel be too severe for success in business, or freedom in social intercourse, its terms must be accounted transcendental or allegorical, and not applicable to ordinary life.

c. But, again, others show the same disposition. He does so who compels his week's or day's religion to yield and fit exactly to his worldly calling and interests, who professing to have faith in the system which bids him receive

the Holy Communion, attend Divine worship, pray to God morning and evening, examine himself, and offer up the sacrifice of a thankful heart, nevertheless suspends them all, if business calls him, without a sigh or a feeling of compunction; such an one drifts gradually away, as life goes on, from that anchorage to which he in youth and early manhood so safely moored his soul, breaks up by degrees the discipline which surrounded it, and takes it away, as the portions of a scene which has been but a changing background through the acting of a drama. By degrees such a man, on the same principle, would give up the Creed if it interfered with the even course of his life, would break down the very bulwarks of Christianity to serve his turn. How many may not, at this moment, be prepared to do this? How many are really ready to say that Dan is as good as Jerusalem, and the unordained as the ordained; or farther still to profess openly, if they would own it, that they are prepared to yield any portion of their religion to suit their own personal worldly interest, and *that* on the principle that they do not esteem it as possessing sufficient intrinsic reality and truth to make any real sacrifice necessary.

d. Such, too, is the man who, professing trust in religious principles, gives them up in the day of trial; yields to dishonest practices to remedy the evil of circumstances; to complaint and impatience, as the refuge from trouble; and to invective and slander to find a safety-valve for anger and vexation, instead of showing, as he ever professed himself willing, prayer, trust, patience, and forgiveness, as the refuge from such conditions of mind. Such a one, and there are tens of thousands, is reduced to this dilemma; either that he has no faith in what he professed and has been throughout a hypocrite, or believing will not act, and thereby declares himself in open rebellion to God's will.

How much of the spirit of Jeroboam is at work in the day in which we live, when the doctrines of Holy Baptism, the Eucharist, the Priesthood, the service of God in public worship, the integrity of Scripture, the Creeds, are becoming matters of question, and men seem preparing to yield, one after the other, what in youth they believed, and up to the present moment, professed to believe, to be eternally true.

LXV.

RUTH.

DUTIES TO ELDERS IN FAMILIES.

RUTH I. 16.

“AND RUTH SAID, INTREAT ME NOT TO LEAVE THEE, OR TO RETURN FROM FOLLOWING AFTER THEE: FOR WHITHER THOU GOEST, I WILL GO; AND WHERE THOU LODGEST, I WILL LODGE: THY PEOPLE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE, AND THY GOD MY GOD.”

1. THE beauty of Ruth's character is acknowledged on all hands, and proverbially pathetic are the words with which she devoted herself to the fortunes of Naomi, “Where thou lodgest I will lodge; where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried.”

The biography of Ruth is of course introduced into the narrative of scripture for the sake, especially, of tracing the lineage according to the flesh, of our blessed LORD. But while this is the primary object of the narrative,

there can be no doubt that Ruth herself is intended to represent one of those exquisitely beautiful traits of female loveliness, in which Scripture abounds, and to which the Apostle refers, when he speaks of Sarah and the holy women of old as being examples to those who would devote themselves to the service of God in His Church. And how fair and perfect would be the entire form of female loveliness which was compounded of the separate elements of the holy women of old ! Imagine a character formed of the modest reserve and energetic zeal of the ever-blessed Virgin ; the tender affectionateness and docility of Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob ; the ardent devotion mixed with so much disinterestedness which shone out in the conduct and actions of Ruth ; the maternal piety of Hannah, with her mind wholly wrapped up in the religious relations of her child, and lastly, add to these the majestic heroism and the elevated irony of Deborah, and you form an entire character which the world would gaze at with wonder, and of which no poet's fancy or philosopher's mind ever conceived the ideal. It is well worthy of remark that Holy Scripture describes the most wonderful variety of characters, and that each one

whose narrative we find there is necessary to fill up the whole—a picture of that glorious period hereafter, when in the Church triumphant above, each separate human disposition sanctified and glorified will take its part of the perfect and majestic whole,—presenting to the mind, as embodied in one form, “whatsoever things were lovely, whatsoever things were of good report” in the human race. We shall have our position there, and our distinctive and separate peculiarity or circumstance is as necessary to the completion of the whole as the single stone of the building which cannot be seen midst the rest, but the absence of which would lead to the fall and ruin of the structure. This position must be observed, not slighted, cultivated not despised, used as a talent and not “hid in a napkin.”

2. What then are the lessons which women especially learn from the distinctive features of the disposition and conduct of Ruth? It is generally thought that the story of Ruth belongs to the time of Eli. At this period the Moabites were in a state of servitude to the Jews, and their country was open to them to sojourn in. Elimelech, a man of Bethlehem Judah, driven by scarcity took refuge with his wife and two

sons in the land of Moab : her name was Naomi. In the land of the stranger Mahlon and Chilion married two Moabitish girls, Ruth and Orpah. Elimelech and both his sons died. Broken-hearted and homeless, Naomi determined to seek again the land of her birth. In order to do this she took leave of her daughters-in-law. In her remark of her having no more sons in her womb, she seems to refer to the custom among the Jews of the widow of a brother marrying his brother if he died childless. Orpah left Naomi weeping, for Naomi had said, "Turn again, my daughters, each to your mother's house, why will ye go with me? The LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt kindly with the dead and with me; the LORD grant you may find rest, each of you in the house of your husband." Orpah took Naomi at her word, but Ruth clave to her, and said, "Intreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." So they two went until they came to

Bethlehem, and they entered the village at the beginning of barley harvest—the mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law. The inhabitants of Bethlehem immediately recognized Naomi, and said, “Is this Naomi?” And she said, “Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the ALMIGHTY has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD has brought me back home again empty. Why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the ALMIGHTY hath afflicted me?” So closes the first scene of this beautiful tale. The second opens in connection with Ruth and Boaz. Naomi had a kinsman, a mighty man of wealth, whose name was Boaz. This Boaz had reapers, to whom he said, “the LORD be with you,” and they answered him, “the LORD bless thee.” It was then he discovered Ruth gleaning with the gleaners, and gave such directions about her, as guarded her from all insult and gained for her the attention of the reapers.

Her conduct to her mother-in-law was soon rewarded by her marriage with Boaz—an alliance which raised her from the lowly position of a Moabitish gleaner to that of the founder of a line of kings. Many circumstances have

been suggested as significant, when seen in connection with David, who was born from her. One amongst others, is her having been sprung from the despised countries of Moab ; nay, more, from a country shadowed by the dark discredit of its origin. So our blessed LORD wove into the garment of His Humanity every portion of our frail condition ; not only the weakness of our nature, but the discredit of our position. And more than this, the whole of Ruth's history appears to us in a highly allegorical light. All the holy women of Scripture seem to be more or less foreshadowings of the Church. Ruth, coming from the land of the alien, from the mere circumstance of fulfilling the duties of her earthly relationships, was brought into connection with her future lord and husband. So the Church, sojourning awhile amidst the thrall of Satan, and coming forth to meet her LORD along the pathway of obedience, was for ever united to Him ; and having been once united to Him was never to be severed.

3. But passing by the allegorical connection between Ruth and her great Antitype, I would on this occasion deal especially with her fulfilment of her duties : and among them her re-

gard for her mother-in-law stands prominently forward. In the present age it is too common to find an impression that an earnest religion suspends our duty to our earthly relations, and that, in proportion as we become devoted to its cause, we may put aside the ordinary calls of our position, as among the claims of a superseded morality. It is on this point that I would speak in connection with Ruth. The first striking circumstance in her life is, that, though a Moabitess, she devoted herself to one of another nation, peculiar for its exclusiveness and its apparently proud separation from the states around it. Heedless of these considerations she placed aside the claims of her own country, the associations of her past life, and the affections of the land of her birth, to enter a land all whose children were inclined to treat the stranger with contempt. The privileged and honoured race of Abraham were inclined to view with no favourable eye the discredited offspring of Lot. All these considerations were thrown at once into the background, and the only figure which advanced to absorb the eye of Ruth, was that of her desolate and widowed mother-in-law, who now stood to her in so near and dear a relationship.

The next feature in Ruth's history—passing by the beautiful address, in which she put forth her intention towards her mother-in-law—is her humble and modest deportment in the village of Bethlehem, and her obedience to the direction of the matron. The devotion that she felt for the cause of her relative did not pass away with the excitement of her unusual and commendable decision—a circumstance too often the case. For generally speaking men resolve, but before the resolution is acted upon, all that gave rise to it is forgotten.

The third feature in Ruth's conduct is her simplicity and modesty in the corn-fields, when, gleaning after the reapers of Boaz, she so implicitly followed the dictates of another; and the last scene over which the curtain of her history drops, is her union with Boaz and the dignity with which the young wife enters upon her exalted station. We have, therefore, seen Ruth in the varied relationships of a daughter-in-law, a widow, and a wife, and watched the propriety and dignity of her conduct on each occasion.

4. I will consider some of those lessons which belong practically to ourselves; and first, we learn to estimate at a very high rate the earthly

relationships amongst which God has placed us, and which are to be viewed by us as binding upon us until the last day of our lives.

The eastern world is full of examples of this kind. Their patriarchal mode of living brought out in strong relief the domestic ties. The religion of the descendants of Shem is illustrated by the groups that gather round the door of the tent, while that of the descendants of Japheth is seen clearly in the single solitary figure of him whose personal powers are being disciplined and influenced by the SPIRIT. Ruth in this way becomes one of a large cluster of groups, and the virtues of her life are connected with the peculiarities and beauties of a vast continental character. We must remember that to Shem especially was granted the privilege of being the religious element in the world.

But again, throughout Holy Scripture we see unmistakeable marks of the seal of approval that God has placed upon the observance of the reciprocal relationships in life to a late age. So Abraham sojourned with his father Terah, and lingered with him amid the barren steppes in the land of the Chaldees; so Jacob and Esau leant together over the death of their father

Isaac, though in the wake of Jacob followed the long train of his children and his servants, and exceeding many flocks and herds. So Joseph went to meet his father, as the patriarchal processions wound over the ruddy sands of the Arabian desert, and when he met him fell upon his neck and kissed him ; so Jethro visited Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, and Moses gave heed to the advice of his father-in-law ; so Jonathan obeyed Saul, though himself a renowned and popular soldier. And, above all, He of whom these are but the types, committed his Mother to the keeping of S. John, and realised His relationship to her in the last as in the first acts of His life.

Many people from principle, and many in practice without a definite principle, give up the reverence, affection, and sometimes even respect which they once felt to parents, or those who stand in a parental position towards them, when they reach their own age of independence. It is no doubt a law of nature, that at a certain age in life the judgment and will are to be left unrestrained, and the restraints of early days are to be removed.

Whenever an effort is made to run counter to this law blame is to be attached, and evil

consequences are sure to follow; but it is at the same time important to remember that we are never free from the obligations due to the parent, the instructor, and the early friend. This feeling is deeply impressed on the mind of antiquity; the rights and claims of hospitality were even observed with the strictest punctilio on the field of battle; and, mixed up with them, is the constant mention of respect to the aged, and reverence for the father's friend.

There are many ways in which this principle is infringed. The wave of each new generation bears it nearer the shore of the great future. To its eye the past, even of yesterday, assumes an antiquated appearance, and the attitudes of the forms from which it is receding appear grotesque and obsolete. Contempt follows on these impressions, and in proportion as they are exaggerated, the slight is unjust which is cast upon the actors of the past. For instance, in the present age, how often we have to see the children of religious parents impregnated with truths and opinions which are in advance of those of the parents, perhaps from the general development of knowledge, or from the concentration of the attention upon the particular

subject in question. An undue weight and importance is given, not only to the new view, but also to its intellectual superiority over the old one; and contempt quickly follows, which wrings many a pang from the parent, and the aged: all this is wrong,—not only wrong, but false. Truth does to a certain degree advance in this manner; but, nevertheless, it often advances through cycles, and it is by no means unlikely that the next generation may return to the opinions of a previous one as if to a newly discovered truth, and will view such as an advance gained upon the generation immediately preceding them.

It is impossible to resist the conviction of advancing knowledge, and equally so for children to be conscious that they are in a certain degree in advance of the parent, and that peculiarly in a day of movement like our own. Nevertheless, whenever contempt follows on this conviction; whenever a slight is put upon those occupying the position deserving so much deference,—whenever they are made to feel conscious inferiority, there has been an infringement of the laws of nature and religion. The self-satisfied smile which implies the conviction of superior knowledge; the transparent effort

made to keep up the conversation to the underrated intellect of the father or mother ; the private conversation or cabal in the family, which too easily escapes, convincing the parents that their day is past, their influence gone, and almost their place wanted ;—all these are indications of a wrong state of things..

But more still, when the advice of the mother, based on the judgment of long years, and sharpened by the keen edge of affliction, disappointment, and temptation is rejected ; when the advice as to what we ought to do in this crisis or in that is based upon the most accurate knowledge of our character and ways from our earliest childhood, excelled by none except by Him “who knoweth our frame;” when this is passed, neglected by us as a forsaken thing ; as a flower once delighted in now left to wither along the roadside of life ; as a voice, the music of whose tones once charmed the ear, whose echoes now are left unheeded to sound round the chamber of departed years, then something is wrong ; or when, in the place of that voice, the opinion of those is sought who knew us but yesterday, whose influence was an accident, yet arresting us as it passed by ; the lustre of whose light has been sufficient to pale the ineffectual

fires of the hearth and altar of the home, the parent, of the early instructor of childhood, of youth, of the past—something is wrong: it might be truer to say, something *may* be wrong, or is *probably* wrong, for there may be such circumstances as to make this state of things either unavoidable or right.

When we have been watching scenes like these, and felt that cold and chilling effect which must follow on such observation; when we have had almost to weep in silence, as our eye has fallen on the aged countenance over which the shadow of disappointment passed; or, when our ear caught the tone of voice, the sigh, the word uttered in the moment of solitude, telling of a heart broken; or, when we have noticed those unmistakeable marks on the countenance, which speak like the sculptured letters on the tomb of the lost and buried past, then we turn, with how much refreshment! to the music of the voice of Ruth to her mother-in-law—"Where thou dwellest I will dwell, where thou lodgest I will lodge, where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried." Oh! what would I give to know that those for whom I sorrow in silence had the love for me that would dictate a speech like that!

Yet, O my SAVIOUR, well I know, and teach me to know it better, that Thou hast denied this blessing to me, that Thou mayest Thyself be more to me, and I to Thee; and that instead of hearing others say to me Thou art listening in love, to hear me say to Thee, "Where Thou lodgest I will lodge, where Thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried."

One form which this fault assumes, is that of irritability of temper, and impatience at bearing the infirmities of advancing age. Old age will of necessity cause a frequent irritation to those who are compelled to live under its influence, and to be subject to its infirmities. We do not know why, but we can little estimate the interior trials and difficulties of those, in the stem of whose life the vital sap has declined, whose outward framework is scarcely more than sufficient to preserve the original type of the character, in which the power to be affected sensitively by external objects is still keen, though that by which others may be affected is dried up and benumbed: when the elements of decay work to the surface, and the vital principle burns low in the lamp of life. All this is hard to bear,

far harder than we who have not reached the condition know of; and more still, when, as in such cases a man is compelled to feel that he has outlived his influence, his power to win sympathy, his weight in that circle in which he once was all; when his opinions which breathed the vigour of freshness are counted antiquated, and he feels conscious that he is rather borne with than truly respected, the spirit often breaks beneath the constant burden. And when all this takes place in connection with those he has brought up, with minds he had once formed, and which now no longer care to be influenced by the recollections of the past, the trial is keener still.

Surely these considerations should lead us to have forbearance and sympathy. No sight can be more painful than that of one younger in years yielding to impatience or disrespectfulness of manner to those who are thus situated; and yet few things are more common than to witness this very lack of forbearance in families where we should expect the greatest harmony, and where through past days there has been the greatest promise.

5. The conduct of Ruth towards Naomi comes before us with singular force and beauty here;

although in following her she followed one whose term of life and ambition drew to a close—a widow whose bough was dry, and whose leaf was seared; one upon whose brow sorrow had so channelled its letters that she proclaimed her name to be Mara and not Naomi; and was returning as a stranger to the land of her fathers—having gone forth full had returned empty.

It was with such a one as this, and not with her own mother, that Ruth cast in the lot of her own life, and displayed the genuineness of her feeling in the words, “Where thou lodgest I will lodge, where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried.”

But Ruth teaches us the lesson more immediately connected with that peculiar relationship in which she stood to Naomi, that of a daughter-in-law. The simple relationships of life carry with them their own adhesive powers, and the yearnings of natural affection draw together by unconscious influences the parent and the child, the brother and the sister. *They* do not reason on their feelings to each other, they find them and they follow them; they exist, and it is enough. If the circumstances of the passing hour ruffle for a moment the

onward course or even current of that love, it contains in it a healing power which quickly restores the equilibrium and reduces the flow of affection to its wonted course. Not so with those relationships created by the accidents of life—the marriage of the daughter or the brother. A stranger is introduced within the range of the family circle, whose aspect at first sight may appear hostile, coming with the lawful claim on more than an equal share of the affections which hitherto were the sole property of the family. He stands at a disadvantage to those around him, and places them at a disadvantage to him. And while this is true of those relationships of life, it is still more so in that peculiar one in which Ruth stood to Naomi. Nothing can be more difficult than to occupy that position with perfect temper, consideration, and equability; and yet society is so constructed, especially amongst ourselves, that we are constantly called upon to exercise this spirit of charity and forbearance towards those who have become grafts upon the natural stocks of life. Many complicated reasons conspire to make this position so difficult an one; the step-mother or the step-child stands in a painful and unfavourable

contrast with these real relationships of which they are the copy. We judge them unconsciously by the elevated standard of the natural relationships, and they must fall. The tender and sympathizing devotion of the mother to her own child, the teachableness of the child towards its parent, are feelings so pure and elevating as to become a very severe standard by which human actions are to be tried; nor would we often think of trying any ordinary relationship in life by such criteria. We do try the step-child and the step-mother by them, and they are found wanting; in fact, we expect too much of human nature in such cases.

Then again, this position is one which of necessity kindles jealousy and suspicion. The new relation invades as a stranger the territory already preoccupied, and finding affections in operation towards the object which he now esteems his own, he himself is jealous of interference and is keenly and sensitively conscious that he is looked upon as an interloper, and is casting his shadow upon objects which once derived their full light from the sunshine of natural affection. Then, too, the difficulties of age, of varied powers of intellect, of difference of disposition and sentiment, all rise up, pre-

senting formidable obstacles to union, unless softened and mellowed by some of those more tender influences that spring from natural affection. These difficulties which must exist in cases like those I have been referring to, can only be met by constant watchfulness, forbearance, and prayer.

It is most important that we should when placed in such position constantly cultivate the spirit of kindness and consideration towards those who stand to them in this relationship, and should take pains to destroy in themselves any inclination towards contempt or suspicion. Perhaps without irreverence we might contemplate the conduct of our Lord to Joseph, as one that will afford us apt rules for conduct in such positions in life, handed on as they have been by traditions of the Church. While Ruth's deep and earnest expressions of love to her mother-in-law must ever remain as incentives to high and holy efforts in the cause of charity.

LXVI.

NEHEMIAH.

SIMPLICITY AND POWER.

NEH. XIII. 31.

“REMEMBER ME, O MY GOD, FOR GOOD.”

1. THE character of Nehemiah is in some respects similar to that of Ezra. He was a man whose life was cast in the same difficult circumstances with something of the same natural disposition, and was called upon to perform a similar work for God and His Church to that of Ezra. His book has by many, though erroneously, been called the Second Book of Ezra, under the impression of its having been written by him. It bears a strong evidence to the contrary; to say nothing of the different circumstances it relates, and the fact that in the beginning of the book Nehemiah is named as the author of it. There is, too, a great difference between the two men, expressed and shown by their writing.

It is with that character with which I have especially to do: but before I go into it, it would be well to examine the relationship between Nehemiah and his predecessor, in the arrangement of affairs at Jerusalem.

2. Ezra seems to have remained ten years at Jerusalem, after having reformed the condition of the people. Everything appears, however, to have gone against him, so that in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus Nehemiah was told at Babylon the melancholy condition of the city; its still shattered walls and ruined buildings. Overwhelmed with grief at the account of this unhappy state of things, he applied to Artaxerxes for permission to go to its relief. Artaxerxes—the Ahasuerus of Scripture, in all probability through the influence of Esther, who was a Jewess, granted the desired leave. Few things can be more simple and touching than the account of these circumstances. While in the palace of Shushan upon inquiry which Nehemiah made into their condition, he tells us that the answer he received from one of the returned Jews was, that “the remnant that are left of the captivity are in great affliction and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and the gates thereof burnt

with fire. And it came to pass, says Nehemiah, that when I heard these words, I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed to the God of heaven. The words of Nehemiah's prayer are so beautiful, that I will give them as they stand :—

“ I beseech Thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him and observe His commandments :

“ Let Thine ear now be attentive, and Thine eyes open, that Thou mayest hear the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel Thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against Thee : both I and my father's house have sinned.

“ We have dealt very corruptly against Thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which Thou commandedst Thy servant Moses.

“ Remember, I beseech Thee, the word that Thou commandedst Thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress I will scatter you abroad among the nations :

“ But if ye turn unto Me, and keep My commandments, and do them ; though there

were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set My Name there.

“Now these are Thy servants and Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy great power, and by Thy strong hand.

“O LORD, I beseech Thee, let now Thine ear be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant, and to the prayer of Thy servants, who desire to fear Thy Name: and prosper, I pray Thee, Thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.”

After this Nehemiah stands before the king as his cup-bearer; and never having been sad in his presence before, the king said to him, “Why is thy countenance sad? seeing thou art not sick; this is nothing else but sorrow of heart!” “And I said unto the king, Let the king live for ever! Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my father’s sepulchres lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire. The king then said to me, (the queen sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be?” The king then gave leave for his departure, and he set out for Jerusalem.

Having reached the town, he took a view of it by night ; he told no one what he was about to do ; and there was no beast with him save the beast he rode upon. He went up and viewed the wall, and turned back again into the valley. Having done this, he begins the work of repair, being opposed by Sanballat and Tobiah. He then describes the public reading of the law, and the celebration of the feast of tabernacles. The book concludes with an account of his various reforms, both civil and religious, in the city. In the seventh chapter we have recorded an account of the names of those who had come up with Zerubbabel. The prayers that he made to God are exceedingly beautiful ; and the whole book ends with that pathetic appeal which is so peculiarly identified with Nehemiah—"Remember me, O LORD, for good."

He was probably the last governor appointed by the Persian kings, who after his death left the government of Judea to the high priests till the Persian government was destroyed by Alexander the Great.

3. Such is a sketch of the work of this remarkable man, whose character appears to have been in some respects like that of Ezra ;

he possessed the same affecting simplicity which was so strongly a feature in Ezra. The strong similarity of their characters may have given rise to the impression that Ezra is author of both the books. The feature in Nehemiah's character slightly differing from that of Ezra, is that while he frequently appeals to God, there is a slight tendency to the consciousness of having served God faithfully throughout his career; in fact, this occasionally would lead us to think that there was an over-consciousness about his goodness, and an inclination to place his virtues in the forefront in his address to God. Warned by the example of the Pharisee in the parable, we dread the least show of enumerating our virtues to Him Who knows us so thoroughly, and sees the shadowy foundation of our apparently best acts. This opens out a highly interesting consideration with regard to character with which the thought of Nehemiah is identified. *Consciousness* of religion cannot be of necessity wrong, and it is only a false estimate of human nature with regard to God which enables men to take another view with regard to such acts. It seems apparent from reading the Bible that men are divided into two classes with regard to this sort of

tendency. There is no flinching from a bold statement in the case of S. Paul, who, without hesitation says he has run a good course, and fought a good fight; and he based upon this declaration that there "was laid up for him a crown of righteousness." In the same way we find constant recognition by David of his own good conduct throughout the psalms; and Samuel protests to his innocence in the sight of the congregation. Hezekiah upon his sick bed narrates the better acts of his life, as a reason for God to prolong his term of years; while more than one in the company of the Apostles reminds our Lord of their self-denying adherence to His cause. These instances gathered from the lives of some of the most eminent saints, show us that there cannot be an essential evil in recognizing these acts of past life as a reason for claiming the forbearance of God.

Those schools in our own Church in days gone by which underrated the powers of the human agent went on to the ignoring even the natural affections. These schools, whose germ was planted from time to time by the hands of those who had seceded alike from the external pale as from the mind of the Church, became by degrees

enveloped by such mists of subjectivity that they lost the clear perception of objects or of acts which could be, in any way, viewed as external to themselves. The system of the Church being an objective one, in proportion as they were repelled from her centre, they were hurled in a direction contrary to hers, and consequently by degrees all moral acts as well as the external objects of Divine worship became unaccustomed to their eyes, and they undervalued, despised, or discarded them, according to the several dispositions of those who dealt with them. The end of this system was the elevation of certain frames, feelings, and conditions of consciousness as the tests of the spiritual state rather than the examination of those acts, the only true landmarks on the heavenward journey. Like those travellers of the desert, who in the vast expanse of the boundless waste, see the mirage, and, imagining it to be a substantial form, give vent to their feelings of disappointment or of joy, only to find that they have been mistaking shadows for forms, and reflections for realities.

One result of this school is to shun with extreme dread the very contemplation as in itself rightly performed or acceptable to God.

A view alike repugnant to common sense as to the teaching of Scripture, or the spirit of the Church. But the end of this morbid impression has been to cut away some of the great props and stays that build up the Christian character, and materially injuring the unfolding of the spiritual mind by refusing *encouragement*. Spiritual progress is, perhaps, most efficiently aided by oblivion of the past. Nor can we trust the sincerity of those principles I have just adverted to; for those who profess the greatest dread of recognizing the merit of human action consider feelings or faith as such, and make them meritorious instead, and tolerate and teach the taking comfort in certain inferior attributes, as warrants for expecting heaven quite as much as those they condemn.

Now one of the best specimens of the proper action of this principle is the case of Nehemiah. He was just the man who might view with complacency and comfort, certain acts that he knew he had done to please God, and while that consciousness shines with a soft and mellowed lustre, on his figure wherever he comes into notice, the evident simplicity of his purpose and sincerity of his mind, and the utter absence of anything like censoriousness or

boastfulness prevent him from being in the least degree shadowed by vanity or presumption—faults so frequently apparent in characters like his, but lacking his truth. In fact, it would be a highly beneficial and useful study to contemplate the whole of his character suggested by all his acts and words in this light; and to see how the charm of it all is derived from the reality with which he expresses his conviction of sincerity.

The exquisite scene described at the opening of the book, wherein he reveals himself standing with Ahasuerus and Esther, derives its delicate beauty from the unaffected way in which he professes his sympathy for the king, and his sadness to all those who read his narrative. I say this is the peculiar force of the description. Again, when having arrived at the Holy Land Sanballat and Tobiah are described as being vexed at his mission; there is great force in his mode of describing himself as the man come to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

In his night journey round the town he does not scruple to bring himself and his motives forward, rebuking the rulers and the priests, and telling them the hand of the Lord was

upon himself. "Then when the wall was built, and Tobiah said that even a fox could break it down: Hear, O our God, for we are despised, and turn their reproach upon their own head." He then proceeds to encourage the workmen under their difficulties, by reminding them that they have God's good favour upon them, throwing them back continually upon the intrinsic value of their *work*.

When again there was a complaint made, he tells us that he consulted himself before that he rebuked the nobles; and when he would justify himself before the people, his apology—similar to that of Samuel—assumes a very plain form, reminding them that though he had been governor twelve years, he had not been guilty of the extortion of former governors, because of the fear of God that was in him, in a way that it was not in them. And when Sanballat and his enemies sent to propose a conference with him—minded, as he tells us, to do him a mischief, he says to them, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease, while I leave it and come down to you?" And when the people requested him to flee to save his life, he said, "Should such a man as I flee? I will not."

This same consciousness of his relation to-

wards God is brought before us by his so frequently speaking of God, as "my God," "O my God, remember me for good." And in that magnificent retrospect which he makes in the ninth chapter of the history of the Jews, he shows the same spirit suggested by the close connection between God and His people.

The last words of this most beautiful and singular book breathe the same spirit. After having told us of his indignation against those who had contracted incestuous marriages, during his absence, at Babylon; he says, he contended with them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God that they would not do the thing; ending all by the oft-repeated entreaty, "O God, remember me for good." In fact, the whole book breathes one constant impression of the favourable eye of God upon him; one continual protestation of innocence and holiness of purpose, and one unswerving spirit of encouragement, based upon the conviction of a pure conscience and rectitude of motive. The practical point for us to ascertain is how much a man loses who will not, and still more, who cannot, take this view of himself, and how much of additional impetus he must gain in his heavenward course, who is able to say, with the Apostle of the

Gentiles, "I have fought the good fight of faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." The reasons for taking this kind of view of those acts of a man's life, which he has performed with a pure intention and by the grace of God, are many. Amongst others this will be a prominent one : The doing so involves truthfulness in our estimate of moral action. No man, who asserts the contrary really believes it ; the assertion, in many cases, arises from hypocrisy, in many more from a feigned or assumed humility ; in many more from a determination to make the words uttered suitable to certain conventionalities in use amongst those religious persons with whom such a man may happen to mix ; and in many more it arises from a mistaken estimate altogether of the standard of merit and demerit. The end of all this tortuous movement to avoid the full light falling on a point of whose existence they have but little doubt must be a certain amount of duplicity more or less conscious ; an unreality of words ending in an unreality of thought, and the utterance of the driest and most unsatisfactory conventionalisms. It is far better openly to express our real estimate of such moral acts.

Another advantage arising from this more candid view of self is, the very direct encouragement that we receive from the consciousness that we have done what is pleasing to God. Of course, in saying that, I do not mean that we can perform any act intrinsically holy, or without many infirmities and shadows; nevertheless, if there be anything, except the merest conventionalism in a man's saying, that peace and happiness will follow on doing what is right, and uneasiness and misery on doing what is wrong, the consciousness of having done the good act, and the feeling that we have, in this or that respect, pleased God, gives us an increased alacrity in the effort to go on pleasing Him, destroying the impression of the "austere man," and confirming that of His being One Who will to the ten talents give the ten cities for reward.

We know it well in our intercourse with our fellow-creature that nothing so encourages in the effort to please as the fact of having pleased; nothing so discourages as the consciousness of not having given satisfaction, or, what is worse, the impression that we have dissatisfied. Without this view all those passages fall to the ground, which speak of overcoming the evil one, and issuing from the storm of temptation unscathed, but with this view each one

of them reminds us of heights gained in the hill country over which we travelled to Jerusalem, and clear advance is made on the heavenly road.

How happy it is! how encouraging for a man to say at the end of the day or at the end of the week, "I have succeeded in this conflict or that, I have done what I could, I have offered to CHRIST the tears of penitence for the past; the alabaster box of holy resolution for the future. I may hope then that He has said, Thy sins are forgiven thee, at least, those of which I repented, and on account of which I have formed the better resolution, and I will to-morrow go on my way in peace."

Spiritual progress is gained by repentance for the past. With the blotting out of sins gone by comes an energetic future. We start afresh. To-morrow is everything when once yesterday has become nothing; but if yesterday tread on the heels of to-morrow, as an avenger of blood, that to-morrow must be a sad one. In the vessel in which we sail, and in the sea over which we go, we must ever look to the land of the morning, to the sunrise in the East, and the angel forms which glance and hover there. The shadows and ghosts which troop along the twilight beach of yester even-

ing beckon us only to despair, call us back again to follow their melancholy hordes into the realms of darkness. Satan marshals them. JESUS stands in the sunlight before us, and bids us come to Him, and He will give us rest. When Mary Magdalene heard she was forgiven, the past forgotten, she never left our LORD; when the blind man received his sight, he followed JESUS in the way. The declaration of Absolution has from the earliest days of the Church been the liberation from the thrall of sin. With this view is inseparably mixed up the humble and honest recognition of works done to God's glory. No man can ever be consciously free who refuses to recognize it; if he do refuse to own its truth, it is equivalent to the declaration that he prays for what he *can* never get, and grasps through life at what must always be a shadow. It may be objected to all this that such a character will be vain, self-righteous or proud; far from it! The simplicity of a child and humility unrivalled belonged to Nehemiah. No man appears more vain and self-righteous than he who continually boasting of his sinfulness in every particular, either proclaims the grace of God a failure, or himself a hypocrite.

LXVII.

NAAMAN.

COMPROMISE.

2 KINGS v. 1.

“NOW NAAMAN, CAPTAIN OF THE HOST OF THE KING OF SYRIA, WAS A GREAT MAN WITH HIS MASTER, AND HONOURABLE, BECAUSE BY HIM THE LORD HAD GIVEN DELIVERANCE UNTO SYRIA: HE WAS ALSO A MIGHTY MAN OF VALOUR, BUT HE WAS A LEPER.”

1. THE character of Naaman interests and pleases, but at the same time perplexes us. There is a great natural beauty about it, and its faults are quite consistent with a character that might be admired by the better portion of mankind. He was a warrior, and remarkable for his valour; like all soldiers he had a considerable amount of singlemindedness; listened at once to the advice of the little Hebrew maid, and determined to seek a remedy for his sore disease by a reference to a supernatural power. He was willing to accept the advice of a prophet

living amongst a hostile people, and at once equipped his expedition for the abode of Elisha the prophet of Israel.

His character is consistent with his position when he showed his quick obedience to the recommendation of his slave, as in his easy reliance on any power which professed agency with the invisible world. Having reached the house of Elisha he was at once offended by the recommendation of the Jordan. The mighty and successful Syrian warrior could brook the idea of seeking the religious ascetic, in the midst of the valleys of Samaria, for he belonged to another kingdom than that of the conquered Israelites, and his voice spoke the accents of other realms than those that were peopled by the bondman and the serf. Elisha's words to Naaman were of heaven or of hell, and either were able to allay the power of the devil, or to summon the administration of angels. The resort in such an extremity to a man so independent of the more humbling associations of his people was not derogatory to the pride of the soldier, but to recognise a dignity and virtuous efficacy in the humble stream which watered the conquered lands of the despised Israelite, the river whose associations at once

spake of the subjected tribes and despised homes and vineyards of the people, was more than he could brook, and he at once rejected with indignation what he esteemed to be the insulting proposal. A country in the mind of a monarch and a conqueror, is peculiarly invested with the associations of the people which inhabit it, and the objects of external scenery ever bring quickly to mind the characteristics of those who dwell amongst them. The rivers of Damascus, Abana, and Pharpar, with their rapid and tumultuous waters, at once brought to his memory the glories and the beauties of the capital of that land which his own victorious arm had raised to prosperity.

Damascus is famous for its waters, and is amongst the most beautiful cities of the east. Its inhabitants speak in raptures of the rapidity of its rivers, and though it is difficult now to assign the channels of these two, the Damascene has ever boasted of his rivers with the same pride as Naaman did at the door of the prophet.

A river is of all the objects of natural scenery that around which the greatest amount of national pride will gather. It brings to mind the means of extended traffic, the fleet or the

merchant craft which bear to distant lands the tale of metropolitan pride and national success ; while the river which bears upon its waves the army of conquest into the bosom of the capital, or through its emptied channel, as the Euphrates of old, the invaders of a foreign land, suggests the idea of humiliation. The Tiber and the Thames are at once names synonymous with triumph or success ; while the Rhine is suggestive of mediæval chieftains and commercial principalities. So Naaman's remark is indicative of his character.

He said that he expected the prophet would come out and strike his hand upon the leper, and he would be clean ; referring to that universal impression current in all lands and all ages, that the touch of the sacred personage would be sufficient to heal disease. In our own land we have tales of the hereditary power of the king's touch to heal the king's evil ; and Edward the Confessor, and Charles II., of England, alike with Vespasian of Rome, were reported in their successive periods to have healed disease and cured blindness, by their touch. This superstition, if we may so call it, only marked more strongly the natural lineaments of the religious character of the soldier ;



nor was his ungoverned rage, when he found himself disappointed in his expectation, at all more inconsistent with the simplicity and nature of his character. His servants remonstrated with him, and with the same openness to the suggestion of inferiors as he had showed to the maid, he yielded to their advice and washed in the despised Jordan.

It is remarkable how men of genius, however strenuous they may be in the exercise of discipline, and rigorous rule, are nevertheless open, in a remarkable degree, to the suggestions of the most illiterate of their followers. Great physical power, and the ascendancy of the more natural moral attributes, do not offer that proud and haughty opposition to the suggestions of others, which high intellectual powers do ; and the spirit which has been in the habit of expecting implicit obedience from those under its influence is often prepared itself to yield uninquiring deference to the authority which it recognizes.

Naaman returned to Elisha, full of gratitude and generous recognition of his own error and Elisha's successful power, he and all his company came and stood before him. He paid a willing and a grateful homage to the God of the con-

quered Israelites, and like Saul of old, with the same generosity and openness and natural disposition, he was compelled at once upon conviction to own the errors of the past, and to declare his firm intention of reformation for the future. His next act was the offering a gift to Elisha ; free and generous in heart, he noticed the poverty of the prophet, and he wished to relieve it.

On the refusal, Naaman put forward the request to be permitted to have two mules' burden of earth ; for said he, " thy servant shall henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord." This request is based on the old impression that the Syrian earth was sacred, as especially belonging to the land that God had blessed. Of course he might have taken as much as he pleased, but the gift of the prophet, in Naaman's eyes, consecrated the burden. He probably intended to raise an altar in his own land, on which to sacrifice to the true God, from an impression of the high sanctity of the country in which Elisha ministered and the healing Jordan flowed. It is a singular circumstance that there was a strong impression amongst the heathen nations that earth conveyed a sancti-



fyng influence. The Mahometans value the smallest modicum of earth from Mecca; and the Jews themselves have so high a veneration for the earth of Palestine, that they count it their highest privilege to be carried from the land of their sojourn to be laid in the dust of their fathers. If this is impossible, their custom is to have small portions of the sacred earth, which is placed under the head of the corpse. This is the case at this day among the Jews in England, so that earth is brought over in quantities continually to be laid in and consecrate their graves. Elisha seemed to imply that Naaman might do as he wished, and take what he would. These traits in Naaman confirm the original impression we have of his character. There is just that amount of superstition about him, which, while it may surprise us in the great warrior and conqueror, is all the more true to the character of the soldier in every age of the world: when soldiers *are* religious, they are often superstitiously so. Gehazi pursued the returning captain and met him with a lie; two changes of raiment were heaped by the generous warrior upon the young men; it was consistent again with his character; his gratitude to Elisha was sincere.

2. One more feature in the conduct of Naaman. He told Elisha he would never more offer burnt-offerings to any god but the LORD. "In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing. And he said Go in peace!" as if he intended to give an assent to Naaman's proposal. There must be some degree of difficulty in determining what Naaman's intention was in making this request; and what Elisha's motive was in giving his assent. Some think that the whole passage refers to the past and not to the future, and that Naaman was apologizing for having in days gone by bowed in the house of Rimmon; but few take this view. It would rather seem that Naaman intended to infer that he could not help, in deference to his master going into the idol temple, as a matter of state arrangement and court ceremony, but that he wished to enter this protest before the prophet against its being thought that in his heart he worshipped the idol. And Elisha seems to

have recognized alike the sincerity of his purpose and the rectitude of his intention.

And this assent he gave when he said to him the words, "Go in peace." We may therefore suppose that in this request of Naaman there is nothing in itself positively wrong, at least, in regard to the case of the man before us. Several questions accordingly present themselves.

3. Are we right in dissembling our real opinions and faith in God in deference to the opinions of another, even though he be our superior and master? Is the permission of Elisha to extend to all cases of difficulty such as the one in which Naaman was placed? or is there some exceptional condition in the position of the Syrian, which excepts the applicability of his case to our own? But we must find the solution to this difficulty in the peculiar kind of difficulty which Naaman represents, and for that purpose we must look back to the traits which I have mentioned above. We have seen throughout that there was a consistency as well as a peculiarity in his condition. He was like thousands around us—honest in heart and in intention; earnest-minded and desirous to do their duty; nevertheless, as being in the position of recent converts

or of young beginners in religion, such men are placed in positions of difficulty and peril: everything depends on the sincerity and integrity of their purpose and the simplicity of their mind. These were determined in the case of Naaman by certain traits of character. The disposition must be tried by the standard of these traits before the conduct of the individual can be included within the limitations to which Elisha's permission was granted. Here lies the point of the question. Once sufficiently show that the character be exactly that of the Syrian captain—so simple, so sincere, so little open to second motive, so fresh and earnest in its efforts to know and serve God, and Elisha's permission takes effect. If God be satisfied with the integrity of our purpose, if with a full and fair opportunity of knowing our character, a religious teacher grant us a permission to act as Naaman wished to act, we are safe in doing it; but where such conditions do not exist, we take that permission to the peril of our souls.

But I will take some cases in order to illustrate more clearly my meaning. A young person in the bosom of a family, whose parents have called forth from him deep sentiments of respect and affection, has a strong conviction

that a certain course of conduct, hitherto pursued under the sanction and wish of those parents, is wrong, and can only be persevered in to the danger of the soul, and at the expense of duty to God. It may be that a certain circle of society in which such a man has hitherto moved bears to him an irreligious aspect; or an amusement has been indulged in which appears in a more than doubtful character. It is difficult, in such cases, for a young person to appear to set himself up as a teacher by breaking away from what his parents have hitherto esteemed harmless. May he continue the suspected practice in deference to the wish of the parent, and despite the violation of his own sense of right; or is he bound at once to denounce the practice, and virtually those who defend it, by suddenly giving it up?

Where there is an entire simplicity and honesty of heart in such a person towards God, may we not feel, that in deference to Elisha's permission, he had better still pursue the suspected course? And may we not feel that where a religious adviser can discover such traits of simplicity as the prophet might have done in the Syrian, that he may grant the permission to succumb externally to the pre-

judices and mistaken notions of others who stand in the relationship of authority. And that for many reasons, partly lest vanity or an over strong expression of egotism be developed in the young; partly lest sincere intention, though mistaken judgment, might be so hindered in such a manner as to check religion or improvement in the character altogether. If, however, there be a swerve from perfect integrity of purpose, such advice would be out of place.

4. Our own infirm nature and the world outside us offer so many temptations for lowering the standard of truth, that we should live in continual anxiety lest the conditions laid down above be not applicable to our case. Then the bowing in the house of Rimmon would simply be an attempt to serve God and mammon, to worship the true God in the heart, and the idol in the world, to proclaim a belief in one tenet at the door of the prophet, and in its contradictory in the presence of the king; to be a true worshipper in Israel and an idolater in Syria; to give the lie at home to the creed that we profess abroad.

5. Such considerations belong peculiarly to the position of public men. They have

great temptations for the sake of influence or of gaining the assertion of one truth at the expense of another, or of winning the esteem or regard of the clever, the powerful, and the successful by an external homage to their prejudices and false opinions, to apply Elisha's permission. It should both be used and made with the utmost caution and anxiety. There may be cases, where there is a perfect simplicity of character and uprightness of intention, where such a line may be not only allowable but wise, where in the long run the cause of truth may be advanced, and the temporary expression of its explicit statement lead fairly to no impression that it is belied. But the danger will be so largely on the other side, that the greatest anxiety and suspicion of self should ever in such cases be exercised.

Such remarks are applicable to the position of men in society in the world, where opinions are expressed in opposition to those held by many present, and where a difficulty arises as to the duty or advisability of publicly denouncing them ; or where practices may be used, and sinful conventionalities complied with, which arouse the indignation of the hearer, and his desire to condemn them,—is he right in keep-

ing silence, or would he do more harm than good by the expression of his sentiments?

The only answer which can be given is that suggested above. After deep search into the motives of conduct,—and every one can make this,—is there reason to believe that there is an entire sincerity of purpose and intention? If so, it is well: if not, there is deep ground for apprehension.

LXVIII.

AMOS.

THE REFINING POWER OF RELIGION.

AMOS I. 1.

“THE WORDS OF AMOS, WHO WAS AMONG THE HERDMEN OF TEKOA, WHICH HE SAW CONCERNING ISRAEL IN THE DAYS OF UZZIAH KING OF JUDAH, AND IN THE DAYS OF JEROBOAM THE SON OF JOASH KING OF ISRAEL, TWO YEARS BEFORE THE EARTHQUAKE.”

1. Amos tells us that he was no prophet, and had received no consecration in the college of the prophets, but his untutored and uneducated mind had received an inspiration which directly transmitted the will of God to His servant.

His prophecy often bears marks of rude and bold thought, though occasionally marked with great elegance. It shows alike the uncultivated mind of the herdsman, and the natural force and beauty which religion will ever give to the expressions and thoughts of the least naturally-refined spirit.

His prophecy is interesting because, among other reasons, it throws considerable light on the manners and customs of the Jews, and incidentally mentions many occurrences of the time of Amos which happened to the Jewish nation and its vicinity. One grand point of interest in it is its testimony to the power of inspiration and religion on the untaught and uncultivated mind. It shows how such a mind may, and, as we have often seen, does strike out bold, simple pathways and forcible expressions, which arrest us with a greater force than even those of the more refined and cultivated.

Other subjects of interest are opened out by this. The manner in which we are to treat those energies and yearnings to proclaim God's Will in many who have not been prepared for it through the ordinary channel; and how far we may be doing wrong by being so attached to routine as to renounce the employment of any of those extraordinary powers which seem struggling for the mastery in many around us.

2. But before entering upon this question an examination of the structure of the prophecy of Amos will show the powers and peculiar

tendency of the mind which needs the consideration of which I have urged. Imagery borrowed from natural scenery and its circumstances, will be among the most forcible modes of expression which such men will use. God appears to the uneducated mind especially revealed in the sounds and sights of nature; and no minds are more open to the influence of the awe inspired by the terrible or sublime in natural scenery, than they whose minds have not been refined sufficiently to be preoccupied with images of their own. We may often gather important lessons from this influence of nature on the mind. She teaches us to dive more into her own calm and profound depth, to read the Will of God. The way in which the objects of nature affected Amos is shown in the rapid images which occur in the third chapter, 4—8: "Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the

LORD hath not done it? Surely the LORD God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the LORD God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"—Here is a mind accustomed to see duties or acts of religion through images borrowed from the external world.

The magnificent idea contained in the closing words of the following passage brings before us the same truth, iv. 9—13:—

"I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the LORD.

"I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the LORD.

"I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning:

yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the LORD.

“Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

“For, lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is His thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of Hosts, is His Name.”

Effects in the sky especially strike on minds of this kind. The firmament of heaven and the veil which hides God from our view naturally appear to us as the scene on which His Will may be marked and indicated. So in urging men to seek God Amos again describes the ALMIGHTY thus, chap. v. 6—8:

“Seek the LORD, and ye shall live; lest He break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Beth-el.

“Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth,

“Seek Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with

night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is His Name.”

The following image is one full of beautiful expression, which very naturally would strike one who had been used to the occupation of the herdsman, and the tender of fruits and vineyards. The prophet wishing to give a vivid description of the restoration of God's favours to His people, says, chap. ix. 11—13:

“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:

“That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by My Name, saith the LORD that doeth this.

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed: and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.”

The whole of this prophecy in fact brings before us the power and beauty of natural scenery in enforcing religion; and shows us how much God does reveal Himself to the minds of the uneducated through the phenomena

which appear on all sides of our daily path. Our Blessed Lord taught through parables, and spake to the minds of the multitude through the sower in the field, the trade of the fisherman, and the signs of the sky; we are led therefore to expect that these will be a model for conveying religious impressions among the most efficient to those who have no other means of ascertaining God's Will. Nevertheless, even this needs its interpreter; and the explanation of the parable must follow either from the lips of the religious teacher, or from the suggestion of the mind itself when more highly educated.

3. But it is not only the form of Nature which the ruder mind of the peasant invests with supernatural and religious awe, but the customs and conventionalities of the society in which he lives. That Amos makes use of these frequently in connection with his religious mission, is apparent from internal evidences, e.g., the repetition of the phrase, "For three transgressions, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment from Moab," &c. a conventional mode of expressing plurality, in use among the Eastern nations.

So his denunciations against the king of

Moab for burning "the bones of the king of Edom into lime." The indignity here referred to does not refer to the fact of burning the bones, but rather to the use made of them, which was that the king of Moab threw the bones of the king of Edom into the proportion of lime made out of the bones of brutes for the plaster of houses: Amos speaking of the circumstance, as he had of the last conventionality according to the ruder and popular mode of speaking of such things.

So again, the sin of "selling the poor for a pair of shoes," in which he refers to a proverbial expression of the ruder kind, to express the practice among the judges of taking bribes from parties who came before them for judgment, a practice constant in the east.

So again, in the apparently rude expression contained in chap. iii. 12. The prophet speaking of "the shepherd taking out of the mouth of the lion two legs or the piece of an ear," refers to the custom among the Jews of the proprietors of cattle expecting from the shepherd the restoration of any animal which he lost, even though torn by a beast of prey, unless he could produce sufficient of the animal to convince the owner that he had not made

away with it. The legs and ears would be enough to show this in the case of a beast seized by a lion.

In the same passage the being taken out of "a corner of a bed," refers to the fact that the corner of the bed or couch was reckoned especially the place of honour.

The expression "cleanness of teeth" to represent "famine," is one which indicates the ruder conventionalities of that order of society in which Amos lived. In chap. v. 16, there is a graphic simplicity in the reference to the modes of mourning to be adopted by those who were to bewail their sins, and to propitiate an angry God. "Therefore the LORD, the God of Hosts, the LORD, saith thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation." This passage refers to the custom so prevalent in the east of hiring women to mourn for the dead, mentioned by Jeremiah, in the ninth chapter.

The sin spoken of in the difficult expressions of chap. v. 26, is one which has reference to the common practice among idolaters of past and present times, of carrying about the idol

of their deity to be worshipped and gazed at by the multitude: the word Chiun referring, as some think, to the chariot in which the idol was drawn. The Jews sometimes were guilty of this practice, from their trying to imitate the idolatrous practice of the nations around them. The image is familiar to those who are acquainted with the usage that prevails among the Hindoos of carrying about with them the image of their monstrous deities.

In chapter vi. we find the following passage: "And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD." In this expression, Amos refers to the habit of burning the bodies, when owing to pestilence or war, there were more deaths than usual. And when plague or pestilence distracted the land, it was a common custom to burn great numbers of bodies with a view to checking the spread of pestilence by the mephitic odours arising from the burning bodies of the dead; and which were for this purpose burned in the valley of Tophet.

The beautiful expression in chap. ix. 13, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reapers, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt," refers of course, to the copiousness and long continuance of the vintage and the harvest.

The prophecy of Amos bears singular relationship to his position and character. He was a herdsman and shepherd, and "a gatherer of sycamore fruit," no "prophet or son of a prophet," as he describes himself, "And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said to me, Go, prophesy to My people Israel." He prophesied almost exclusively to the ten tribes, although he was a native of Tekoa, in the kingdom of Judah. While prophesying in Israel, Amaziah the priest of Bethel opposed him, and bid him return to Judah, and he went. Tradition tells us that he was maltreated by this Amaziah, having a nail driven through his head. He prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam, son of Joash, King of Israel, two years before the earthquake. This earthquake seems to have been a ter-

rible and celebrated event. Isaiah refers to it, chap. v. 25. "The hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets." Zechariah also refers to it.

4. One practical question which the character of Amos opens out to us, is the real condition and value of the uneducated mind under the influences of religion. There is often an inclination alike to overrate as to underrate this; and serious injury is done by both tendencies.

There is an impression, and a right one, that the effect of religion on the rude mind is one which often becomes a substitute for the direct work of what is ordinarily called Education. But it is fatal when this impression is too deep, or is allowed an undue weight in the balance of judgment.

The mere fact of the mind and its powers being fixed on definite objects, with a view to grasping their meaning or contemplating them with reverence, alone gives those powers a keenness, strength, and tone which is the same in kind, and resulting very much from the same cause as the strength given by the more usual educational processes. The result of education is gained through the bringing out of the mental

powers, and the exercise of their energies through the opportunities offered of exciting attention, of abstraction, generalisation, &c.

All this is done as well by the object of religious contemplation as any other ; and more so, inasmuch as any voluntary effort of such kind is more effective than one which is forced, and in proportion as the affections and desires go with the contemplation, the work accomplished is more efficient and real.

The close observation of the coincidences of God's Providence, parallelisms or similarities in passages of Holy Scripture, the study of the Creed and the exposition of its expressed truths, the dealings of God with the soul, —all these become apt opportunities for bringing out the interior energies as the more direct study of language, science, or logic. Then too the kindliness and goodwill of religion, the principle of forgiveness, the desire to help each other, to palliate faults and exalt virtues, to consider others more than self, and to prefer their happiness to our own, give often that softness and mellowed influence to the character which makes up after all a large portion of what we call refinement.

Religion too, leads to the contemplation and

admiration of God's works, and that in the highest and holiest manner, both seeing God in them, and wondering at His power and love. This must aid in the cultivation of that power of the mind which above all others gives it an elevated tone. To the highest order of characters these objects themselves are softening and chastening, and the tracing them back to their great cause enhances their beauty and deepens their impressions.

There are many and important practical questions which arise out of this view of my subject; such as the correction of many errors that might be fatal to the growth of truth, and the assertion of many truths too much forgotten and neglected by men around us. It is, for instance, doubtless a truth, that there is no absolute necessity for human wisdom towards the attainment of personal religion, and that many a man may reach an eminent degree of holiness who is, to use the common parlance of the poor, 'no scholar;' but while this is so, it is a still more fatal error to imagine that the fact of the absence of human knowledge or the dulness of human intellect predisposes or fits a man for the attainment of heavenly wisdom, or the cultiva-

tion of the virtues of the Gospel. The latter error led into the dangerous errors of the Puritan school, and considerably strengthened the inclination to hold Church authority in contempt, when contrasted with individual holiness and desire to do right. While, on the other hand, the counter-opinion has sometimes led men to despise and pass by those witnesses of the Spirit which so constantly are borne by the poor and the lowly of this world ; thereby ignoring one of the peculiar features of the Gospel itself, that to the poor the Gospel is preached, that the most illiterate of men were the first recipients of Christianity, and the first propagators of truth to the world ; and that it is not to the wise, or the prudent, or the powerful of this world that the truths of the Gospel, or the mysteries of Christianity are of necessity made known.

LXIX.
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

PRIDE.

DANIEL IV. 37.

**"NOW I NEBUCHADNEZZAR PRAISE AND EXTOL AND
HONOUR THE KING OF HEAVEN, ALL WHOSE WORKS
ARE TRUTH, AND HIS WAYS JUDGMENT: AND THOSE
THAT WALK IN PRIDE HE IS ABLE TO ABASE."**

1. THERE is a grandeur and at the same time an awe cast around the history of Nebuchadnezzar which draws out the reverential attention of childhood and the careful investigation of those who are interested in watching the course of human character and motive. His terrible invasion of the Holy Land; the way in which the ALMIGHTY seemed to go before and to follow him; the voice of prophecy, which proclaimed his advent from time to time; his evident fulfilment of God's own designs with regard to His sinful people, and the remarkable pride of his disposition meeting with so signal a punishment from heaven; all alike invest him

with an importance which forbids us to pass him by in the study of the characters of the Old Testament.

It will be well however, before I go into the consideration of his personal character, to see what his position historically is. Sennacherib had embodied in his empire the Babylonians, Medes, and Armenians, besides his own people, and many other tributary states. When he had received his signal punishment from God, in the reign of Hezekiah, the kingdom, in its various portions, revolted from the sway of Esarhaddon, his son ; so that this latter prince, occupied the first years of his reign in re-establishing the broken frame of the empire. He finally lost the Medes, but having recovered the Babylonians, he sent them, as a punishment, into the waste cities of Samaria. Esarhaddon then ravaged Judea, and took Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, prisoner, sending him a captive into Babylonia. He is thought by many to have been Sardanapalus ; it was his descendant, after one generation, who was the Nebuchadnezzar of Holy Scripture. This Nebuchadnezzar made an expedition against the Medes, and, to do this, summoned all the tributary provinces. The Western pro-



vinces including Judea, refused to furnish their contingent of troops, on which Nebuchadnezzar sent against them Holofernes, who was slain by Judith in the siege of Bethulia. This, with its consequent rout of the army, was a serious blow to the Assyrians.

Pharaoh-Necho, King of Egypt, revolted against them, and Josiah, King of Judah, joining with the Assyrian king, was himself slain at Megiddo. The capture of Nineveh followed. Nebuchadnezzar was one of the most powerful monarchs in the East, and occupied no unimportant position in the relations of the Jewish nations with the Eastern empires.

It remains that we should consider those points in which he comes before us as a person of considerable interest in connection with the providential dealings of God with the human race. His name, his character, and his punishment are alike a proverb. His connection with the Church of God and the people whom **JEHOVAH** loved, and the way in which he is made the subject of prophetic revelations, excite our surprise, when we consider the marked manner in which his personal conduct is condemned and punished by a signal display of God's chastening anger. His position there-

fore, as well as his personal character become matters of interesting consideration.

The former of these and the contradiction which it seems to involve, remind us of many other cases which I have already considered, namely; of those kings and conquerors who, without any conscious personal desire to serve the true God, were yet raised up to subserve His purposes, and to aid or chasten that Church, for whose final deliverance, the movements of nations and the motives of conquerors are swayed by the ALMIGHTY. While however such men were induced to work out His designs, they seem to have been more or less, in a remarkable manner, guilty of leading faults: such was Jehu when raised up to punish the wicked house of Ahab—involving, as his history does, the contradictory appearances of zeal for the LORD and zeal for Baal; such was Cyrus, the liberator of the captive Israelite and the asserter of the truths connected with the Temple of Solomon and the Law of Moses, while he himself worshipped the idols of his fathers. Such was Sennacherib, who, while in his victorious career, his desolating armies swept past the ruins of Admah and Zeboim, and laughed to scorn the helpless idols which

lay scattered round the slaughtered heaps of Ina and Sepharvaim, was compelled unconsciously to display the power of JEHOVAH, and his empty boasts to scatter the hosts by which Jerusalem was invisibly compassed. Such was Nebuchadnezzar, who, while he humbled to the dust the people of God, in order that along that pathway of humiliation the LORD might visit them in mercy, became himself the by-word of pride, and practised openly the sin which he was raised up to punish in the Jews. But of all this class none present greater paradoxes than Nebuchadnezzar, because he seems more immediately to have been under the influence of heavenly inspirations and convictions than those just referred to; and more than that, throughout his career he appears to have been open to good feelings and convictions which, especially at the end of his life, give us great hope with regard to his case. Originally impelled to invade the Holy Land by his own ambition, though finally led to that work by the overruling hand of God, he returned with his captives to his own land. Here, under the impressions of a remarkable dream, he had reference to one of those captives whose wisdom and holiness he had already tested. In

this dream and its interpretations, Nebuchadnezzar found that he was the unconscious prophet of the future destinies of the Church in her relations with the world. He set up the image on the plain of Dura, and on the three children refusing to join in the idolatrous worship, he became aware of the vanity of his own religious creed, and of the power of that, whose upholders he was persecuting; and ordered his people, on the pain of signal and capital punishment, to worship the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. After this he again fell into the sin of intolerable pride, for which he was driven, under the workings of a sad insanity to eat grass like an ox, and to shun the intercourse of his fellow-creature.

Now the point with which we have to deal in this character is the paradoxical union of overbearing pride and yet the strong convictions all the time of the almighty power of God. And this was not only a conviction, but a fully realized truth, and one which frequently affected the practice of the king, in such a way as to induce him to alter his whole mode of life; nor only that, but to go to the humbling extent of recognizing before his people the errors of his idolatry and the purity of the persecuted reli-

gion ; and, as if not satisfied with this he gives utterance to sentiments of such remarkable humility and submission, as would arouse our astonishment in a person far advanced in religion. Few things can be more expressive than the penitence of Nebuchadnezzar in the following terms,—“ I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and my understanding returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation, and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing ; and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth ; and none can stay His hand, and say unto Him, ‘ what doest Thou ? ’ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol, and honour the King of heaven ; all Whose works are truth, and His ways judgment, and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.”

Such are the expressions of the king, whose pride was nevertheless so overpowering, that he was driven from men, had his haunts among the beasts of the field, his hair to grow like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws ;

and suffered this terrible calamity, on account of his insufferable pride which he displayed before God and man.

2. Now, in dealing with his case, the first question we have to consider, is the nature of pride itself. It is one of the remarkable, and, at the same time the most inexplicable of the feelings to which we are subject. Few too are more misunderstood. Many faults are called by its name which have a different source, and others are confused with it which have no strict connection with it. It is often vilified in terms too excessive and inapt, and its better and more useful manifestations confounded with its viler ones, in such a way as to destroy our true view of it altogether. It is by many looked upon as of the same family with vanity, though, perhaps, no two faults are more widely apart. It is often applauded in the same breath with self-respect and independence of character, on occasions when it is a simple scandal upon those attributes to class them with it. In some of its manifestations it is capable of defying God; in others it is simply reducible to that amount of self-reliance and manly energy which is one of the highest and noblest attributes of man. Herod the king was inordinately vain, but knew no-

thing of pride; Saul is the most splendid instance of pride in its worst form which we have in Holy Scripture; Samuel seems to have had in his character a portion of pride of which Jacob was destitute. While vanity is attributable to Moses in the Old Testament, the same fault seems to lie at S. Peter's door in the New; and we may well imagine that, had their natural characters developed, instead of the germs of the spiritual life, S. John and S. Paul would have manifested pride rather than vanity.

There are so many gradations of pride, and so many feelings akin to it, that one of the best ways of ascertaining its distinctive nature is seeing it by contrasts. The pride of Nebuchadnezzar and that of Saul were widely different. In the case of the former we find a strong, innate consciousness of superiority,—a feeling that the enormous power of earthly circumstance made him independent of all authority, even that of God Himself; he was ruler of the vast Assyrian empire. That empire had, to a great degree, been consolidated by himself, and the peculiar nature of despotic power in the East gave him an ascendancy over the souls and minds of his subjects. “Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house

of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" As he said this he was walking in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and just twelve months had elapsed since Daniel's interpretation of the king's dream, preparing the king for the certain consequence of indulged pride. The same expression of feeling occurs in the cases of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when he attempted to govern the souls and consciences of his subjects, by the compulsory worship of the golden image.

But while this disposition was indulged in by the Eastern monarch, and earthly circumstance became the fuel to pride, there existed, side by side with it, a consciousness of God's Presence, His Nature, and His Almighty power, and besides this a full desire to recognize with the most entire humility that Presence and Power ; so much so that, at times, his recognition of God stands amongst the few striking instances of faith and humiliation. His character is without sarcasm or flippancy ; it is composed of simple elements, which stand separate one from the other. Far different is the character of Saul ; his innate disposition to pride existed and increased wholly

independently of external circumstance. The gift of the kingdom, and the might of his victorious armies did not inflate his soul with pride any more than the murmurings of the people, or the alienation of Samuel. Circumstances neither increased nor diminished the feeling. He was, what he was, as much seeking his father's asses, and hidden among the baggage, as when he stood before Samuel the anointed of the Lord, and returned from Amalek with captive kings in his train. He never seems to have had any real belief in God's existence, Person, or Nature. A strong dash of sarcasm and satire pervaded his conduct. In fact, his pride was the growth of interior disposition, and was unaffected by circumstances without him. Now it is clear that these two men stand apart from each other. There is more hope of Nebuchadnezzar's case than of that of Saul. In the one there was ever an inward principle to appeal to. I shall have again to advert to this comparison, but in the meantime leave it with the suggestion that, while Saul's is the most pure and intense form of pride, Nebuchadnezzar's is the more frequent one, and is the case most important for us to study.

But it may be well to compare Nebuchad-

nezzar, on the other hand, with such a character as Herod, in which comparison, the predominant element of the character of the Babylonish King will derive great advantage when seen in contrast with that of the vain and conceited tetrarch : " It is the voice of a God and not of a man," was the shout of the people, when they saw Herod arrayed in his royal robes, seated on his throne ; and he, hearing the cry of adulation, encouraged it, and aided the idolatrous impression of the people, that the corruptible mortal was the incorruptible Eternal. The mortality and corruptibility of the sinful king was presently proved by the worms which openly devoured him, and God suited the punishment to the crime, by convincing mankind of the reality of the latter, through the instrumentality of the former. Herod was a man, who, convinced intuitively of no inherent power by which he might stand independent, was yet silly enough to accept the attribution of it with the same satisfaction, as if he had been possessed of it. Many are like him whose record is in Scripture, and whose lives and actions are striking our daily notice.

Amongst the holy and the eminent servants of God, Moses had the tendency towards the

fault of Herod. S. Paul, perhaps, more than any other among the saints of God, resembles in natural character that of Saul; while the character that most resembles Nebuchadnezzar amongst the servants of God is that of Jehoshaphat. Between each of these extremes and the centre there are many gradual shadings off, the distinctive features of which it would be interesting to study. Such would be the rich Fool of the parable, who, trusting to his barns and his corn, occupied a place between Nebuchadnezzar and Saul; and very many who, relying too much on the attribution of powers from others which they do not feel that they really possess, in such degree as to give them true independence, occupy a standing ground between Nebuchadnezzar and Herod.

I have taken three classes of character all of which popularly, though not truly, would come under the general denomination of pride. Saul's, which was a character of genuine pride; one which firmly believed in its own inherent power of existence and action; independently of any superior authority or source; and if he professed belief in such, he only did so in conformity with national prejudice, or the associations of education. The pride of Nebu-

chadnezzar, on the other hand, resting on circumstances, which were the adventitious accidents of his life : his empire, his successes, his vast dominion, and his prestige of conquest ; while side by side with the pomp of circumstance he clearly saw the present Deity, acknowledged His power, and humbly bent beneath His vengeance. He was not essentially proud, though " his heart was lifted up within him." With these two cases, what is strictly called pride ceases, for Herod's case is strictly one of vanity—a fault far removed from genuine pride.

Pride recognizes some positive, indefeasible claim to independence of action and irresponsibility, and is pained rather than otherwise when others attribute to it its own quality. Vanity simply takes pleasure in being praised for the possession of what it very often does not possess, and if it does possess, cares far less for having it, than being thought to have it. In the scale of human motives and actions, how infinitely does this fall short of that nobler, though often perverted quality, spoken of above.

Such, then, is the difference between pride and vanity, and such some of the gradations of the former.

3. In the world around us we find many who represent both of the classes into which I have divided the proud. There is a man who has an impression which is almost beyond the reach of his own comprehension, that he stands independent of any being or power; he takes no particular pleasure in reflecting on that independence, nor does he care to manifest it to another for its own sake; he especially shrinks from expressing that consciousness to others. Nevertheless he has inward satisfaction in feeling that he has worked up to his independence and not violated the principle. Silent, reserved, and often moody, he is keenly sensitive to the slightest manner that might imply contempt or neglect in another; receives with some degree of coldness and suspicion the statements of the great doctrines of religion; the necessity of Grace, or the boon of the Atonement. He is often less affected by the slight and injuries passed on him by his fellow-creatures than he is by some kindness done him which implies, by the remotest possibility, inferiority in himself. He finds he has been discourteous and sullen for days together to those whom he sincerely regards as his best friends, and wakes up as from

a dream, astonished to discover that no harm was intended. He makes himself miserable and withdraws into his own inner world, without being able to say why it is that he exiles himself from the world without. He prefers death to disgrace, and honour to affection; and will generally find himself in the long run mistaken about the motives of others and the successful result of his own line of conduct. This character is essentially proud, and resembles Saul, the type of the class. It is the most dangerous form of pride, and requires a treatment different to a second kind of pride which I now proceed to describe.

This class of feeling is represented by the man who bases his sense of independence on some special attribute or circumstance connected with his life; great intellectual power; wealth; the power to influence others; ancestral birth; personal beauty, strength, or any such. This stands separate to his actual self, but he feels it is his own, as a matter of property; his conscience, his moral feelings stand separately to it, and can be affected by the Spirit of God, and affect in turn the feelings which view with pride the power possessed. When such power happens to fail or disappoint

him, there is no longer that inherent conviction of entire independence, but sliding from the prop against which he had leant, he falls in humility on the ground, or, betaking himself to despondency, will show dependence upon nothing, not even upon self.

Now the modes in which these two men should deal with themselves are very various. Both are possessed of spirits distinctly alien to that of the Gospel, and equally need an entire renovation of character before they are summoned to the tribunal of the awful day. Representatives of the former class pass in lengthened lines before our view on the world's great highway. There is Saul, the son of Kish, using Samuel as but a tool, and the Mosaic law but as a machine; there, too, in the elder world is Cato, the representative of Roman independence; and Diogenes, the Cynic philosopher, who, wrapped round in the ragged mantle of humility, covered a bosom essentially proud. In the same line follow many of the Dorian race, who, conscious of no single distinctive power, were proud of their bare existence in the family of man. There, too, we see the melancholy forms of many of those scoffing opponents of early Christianity; Porphyry, and Celsus, Arius the

impugner of the deity of the LORD, and Pelagius the propounder of the sufficiency of the human will. All these, and thousands more rising up in the ancient and mediæval world, alike from the regions of the ecclesiastical and political strife, form the procession of those I have called essentially proud. An indefinite pride which they counted a virtue, consumed, by a gradual consumption, their vitality, while it lent a brilliant, but sickly lustre, to their eye.

Widely different, and vastly more numerous, are the followers in that other wake : men proud of something ; an attribute, a talent, or a circumstance. Nebuchadnezzar, boasting of his vast dominion ; Sardanapalus, tenacious to the death of indomitable purpose. Xerxes, proud of millions ; and Leonidas, proud of tens. Pompey, proud of being leader of the aristocratic East ; and Cæsar, proud of guiding the destinies of the more popular West. Alexander, boasting of worlds which left no more to conquer. The Crusader, and the Knight of the fourteenth century, consciously proud of the possession of indomitable valour and a righteous cause ; the Cid, the scourge of the Moor ; and Edward, the conqueror of France. All these but suggest the multitudes

which crowd over the historic pathway of the world, whose eye gazed upon some distinctive feature of their own, and who thanked God that they were not as other men are. They suggest to us that if so many have gone before as the types of these classes of character, many more are likely to be formed upon their mould in the most private pathways of the busy and tempted world. One word in conclusion.

If members of the former class would correct their faults and prepare to meet God, they must first try to realize definite and dogmatic Christianity; they must hold and gaze at the creed, as if it were a limited, impersonating form of truth, revealed by God. They must get rid of their tendency to subjectivity and contemplation, leading them into scepticism or latitudinarianism in their views of religion, and consent to become dogmatic. They will find it hard work, but the essential feature of their work is that they worship an idol made without hands, even "self."



LXX.

ESTHER.

THE CHURCH IN CAPTIVITY.

ESTHER IV. 14.

“FOR IF THOU ALTOGETHER HOLDEST THY PEACE AT THIS TIME, THEN SHALL THERE ENLARGEMENT AND DELIVERANCE ARISE TO THE JEWS FROM ANOTHER PLACE; BUT THOU AND THY FATHER’S HOUSE SHALL BE DESTROYED: AND WHO KNOWETH WHETHER THOU ART COME TO THE KINGDOM FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS?”

1. THE portraiture of Esther in Holy Scripture is very distinct and beautiful. She is one of those whom a few touches have been sufficient to give to our eye with high finish and clear characteristic features. And more than this, she forms one of a drama whose scenes are very perfect: Ahasuerus, Vashti, Mordecai, and Haman. Each of these has his own definite character, and works out his own

part in the scene to which they were called of God. But while this places before us a perfect arrangement as it were of many scenes which now occur continually before our eyes in the world; (such as the machinations of designing men, the pride of their power, the persecution of the good and powerless, the gentle influences of the holy by degrees working their end for the subversion of evil and the establishment of justice through the recoil of the designs of the wicked on their own head,)—a light is thrown on the background which is usually enveloped in darkness and shadow to our eye, and we see the Hand which guides it all—the machinery by which all is moved, and the end to which each action tends.

However similar the scenery may be to that of the ordinary events of life in the world, equally similar are the motives and ends of both. What seems to be the accidental combination of political arrangement, is really the direct ordering of heaven. What seems the singular coincidence of individual influence working beneficially is really the immediate plan of Providence; and what appears the paradoxical recoil of the scheme of the wicked on their own head is to be found among the eternal

rules and laws by which the race of man is governed.

The ambitious conqueror who planned the ruin of empires and violated the first rules of justice and truth in his wild career, sunk himself before courts where justice was denied him, and his own ruin completed. It was no accident. It was the working of God as much as was the gallows of Haman. The tyrant who hurried off hundreds unprepared to eternity by the planned assassination or the secret execution—died without time to say, LORD, forgive me. It was the direct retribution of heaven. The cruel device of overbearing power was subverted by the entreaties and influence of a woman, a wife, and a mother. The plan was counselled in heaven, and the eloquence of the pleading received its efficacy from God Himself.

The extermination of a whole people has been planned—the sudden death of the schemer, an adverse wind, a flash of lightning has hindered its execution. The decree has gone forth, and a race has fallen except one, a child, who escaped destruction—a boy who gallantly defended himself, or an infant in the arms of his nurse. But the one who escaped was sufficient to defeat the design of

the murderers by resuscitating the almost extinct race, or living to wreak vengeance on the head of the designer. The decree has gone forth to slay, but a flaw in a clause, or the conscientious qualms of the executioner or an accomplice, has hindered the entire design. All this *seems* singular coincidence, it *is* the direct order of God.

These may be regarded as platitudes, but there is more special significance in them than may appear. We do not fully recognize the Divine mind : we are surprised, and stand astonished : we use expressions which show that we are not fully prepared to recognize a particular providence in all human events.

2. Among the characters which stand out in this sacred tale, I will take that of Esther, as the one furnishing us with the most striking lessons. Like Daniel of old, she was raised up to benefit and aid her people by occupying a position in the house of a heathen king. She had to conform to much which was externally connected with the customs and habits of an alien people. Her own predilections must have been often violated and her conscience perplexed, still she did her work ; she fulfilled her great mission, and has left a memorial great

and illustrious among women. She was the adopted child of Mordecai, who had come up with the captives from the Holy Land, and occupied some post at the palace of Ahasuerus, probably that of a porter at the gate. She seems after her elevation to her position at the court of the king to have been admitted to the higher privileges of the wife of the king.

Her character is brought before us with many touches of great beauty and force. Her strong affection for her adopted father after her elevation; her regard for her people, the Jews; the energy with which she did her work; her breaking through her own natural awe at approaching the king unbidden; and her fasting with her maidens that her intercession may avail the more, are all traits of that mixture of female delicacy and shrinking modesty coupled with determined courage and heroic constancy in the day of trial, which strikes us with pleasure and admiration when we see it. She has little of the masculine and visionary enthusiasm of Deborah, or the stern energising simplicity of Jael, while she has an affection and devotion, a clinging tenacity of constancy to the cause which she feels to be her own, which ranks her with Ruth, though a higher class of

circumstance and result called forth her energy and gave the form to her character. There is an undoubted loveliness about her character throughout, and we feel we are gazing at one who not only is allowed to stand prominent among the people of God, but amongst all those who are ever honoured and beloved of man.

There can be little doubt that her position is also allegorical. Like Sarah, Rachel, and Ruth, she resembles the Church of God in some phase of its existence, its struggles and trials. Her similarity is clear. One of the chosen race cast in the days of captivity among the people and customs of the world, she exercised her influence for God and the protection of His people.

The Church advocates, pleads, warns, and suffers for God's people, to screen them from false accusation, and to subvert the machinations of the wicked : so did Esther. Her calm patient suffering, her gentle influence prevailed with her husband, and she saved her people from ruin. In the fastnesses of the palace, in fact her prison, she conferred with Mordecai, and her fast and prayers in her chamber, followed and preceded her communication. She was a captive in a strange land. She had to

sing the song of Zion in the heathen court. But the day of her delivery was at hand, when the machinations of the wicked were to fall on their own head, and the gallows of Haman receive their inventor.

With this view of Esther's position an additional lustre is shed on her character, and new force is given to her relationship which justifies a calm and reverent contemplation of the practical and consoling lessons which she suggests. The first of these is at once discernible to those who are placed in similar positions.

3. None or few now are likely to be called upon to serve God in the heathen court or household: still, many are called upon to exercise their duties among those who are severed from them in principles and opinions. Men and women are often compelled to be inmates of homes whose fashions ill accord with their own views of right, or to perform offices for or in conformity with those from whom they are separated in the house of God. The very differences which exist in Christendom alone necessitate this, and the wife or child may be compelled to dwell with and love those who recognize the claims of another communion, or who are themselves outside the limits of the visible Ca-

tholic Church. Nor is this all. We sometimes are compelled to live with those who do not agree with us in our view of practical life, who tolerate a greater degree of free intercourse with the world than we like ourselves; who permit wide-mindedness to transcend the fine limits of reverential obedience to the laws of eternal truth; or who differ from ourselves in the mode of treatment we should use towards others in reproof or indulgence or warning. The inmates of the same household, the members of the same family, the residents of the same parish, are often called on to decide in cases difficult as these, and they may take example from the conduct of Esther when placed in positions similar to hers.

Again; despite the consideration of national customs and manners which imposed a restraint on the young Jewish princess, there is something strikingly gentle and submissive to those with whom she lived and in whose power she and her destinies lay. Reserve, gentleness, kindliness, and humility marked her conduct to Ahasuerus: so that she gained her cherished end, and ere a brief period of time had passed by, she had reached the object for which she would have originally sacrificed all, to reach which she might

have been tempted to use the weapons of indignation, resistance, anger, and revenge.

Whatever be our position, our truest policy as well as our holiest duty, is to exercise the same qualities ; and yet we find the exactly contrary line frequently adopted.

If the parent and the child differ—if the son or daughter whose reading, experience, and thought may have led them to different conclusions from those held by the father or mother, the temptation then easily yielded to, is to show continually a spirit of contempt, resistance to authority, scorn, or sarcasm ; so that the relation between parent and child is infringed, the end which was aimed at is not gained, and a far greater fault indulged and perpetuated than the omission of the originally designed duty would have been. How strange that this is not seen ! how wild a mistake in any one to imagine that the violation of humility and meekness can be justified by the fulfilment of any other duty ; and that one moral law, and that a primary one may be suspended from the performance of another, and that perhaps a secondary one, and dependent, after all, on our own individual and possibly perverted judgment ! A young woman conceives it her duty

to abstain from presenting herself at a certain occasion of social intercourse which her parents wish her to go to, and which she has all along been in the habit of hitherto attending with them. She is impelled, as she imagines, and professes, by a wish to please God. The opposition to a parent's wish produces suspicion and pain, and perhaps remonstrance and resistance. This is followed by manifested contempt on the part of the child, a clear display of the conviction that the parent is against some great principle which the superior power of a new light has given the child, and rebellious feelings, cutting and chilling silence, open sarcastic contempt, are shown toward the parent; so that at last surely no other end is gained than the violation, in a large and wide measure, of that deep regard, to fulfil which such a person faints before her course of opposition. We cannot please God by violating one portion of His law to fulfil another; still less when the violated portion is the great primary law of His own manifest establishment, and the fulfilled one is but a secondary portion of it; and, as I suggested above, very probably dependent only on our own personal judgment and opinion. God is not pleased by this, but self

may be. His kingdom is not furthered, but our own designs. His will is not conformed to, though in real truth our own has been successfully set up against it, and religion been made the mere opportunity of enforcing and establishing our own immediate ends. This *is not religion*—it is *refined selfishness*.

But more than this: not only is the superior duty sacrificed, and the spirit of a Christian violated, but the end is not gained. What was the end of the resistance or opposition? The being allowed to give up the practice in question without opposition? but this is not gained. The altered view of the parent? but this is not gained. The old view is confirmed. Greater unity and the wider furtherance of God's kingdom? but these are not gained—none of them; the evil increased and confirmed, and only self aggrandised, and the individual elevated at the expense of unity, charity, peace, and sympathy. So, too, we are taught to value the effect of indirect moving towards this kind of end. Esther scarcely hoped to reach what she did. The exaltation of Mordecai, the ruin of Haman, and the salvation of the whole Jewish people. Still all this was gained, and through the influence of her conduct, en-

treaties, and mode of acting. So we often find that those who in situations such as these described above, simply try to do their own duty and to work out God's ends by conforming their lives and hearts to His law, really reach all they desired, and much more than that—the promotion of general religion and extension of God's kingdom on earth; while, by the use of *direct* means and efforts, we shall find that few of these ends are gained, and only our own position strengthened. This will not do; it simply ends in the thinnest unreality. It is placing forward an end which is not the true one, and which is lost rather than gained by the means used towards it; while the use of the indirect means reaches all, and loses none of what the honest mind desires. Haman's death, Mordecai's exaltation, the people's salvation, the gentle, pure, meek, and Christian forbearing and humble spirit striving rather to reverence others, than to suspect and criticise them, and aiming at understanding others and being understood by them, rather than standing apart from each other.

But while Esther's character individually suggests much, the type, which she manifestly is of the Church, is pregnant with subjects of

reflection for us. The queen was a sojourner in the palace of the heathen king, but her intercession prevailed for her own, and was sufficient to arrest the course of the wicked, and to detect his evil counsels. Though a woman, weak and powerless, she proved mightier than the favourite vizier, and was able to shed honour and credit on a despised and dishonoured people. Her entreaties were preceded by the fasting and prayer in which she and her maidens joined ; while outside the palace gate her kindred lifted up holy hands and hearts of sympathy to give force and strength to her intercession.

It may be of necessity that the Church lies "among the pots," that her feathers are tarnished, and her wing paralyzed and unable to rise from the weight which crushes and oppresses it. At least it is so among us ; still she is fair, still she is a "King's daughter, all glorious within," whose "clothing is of wrought gold ; her raiment of needlework and virgin fellows bear her company." Days have been when she was received and entertained with regal splendour, when she was surrounded by the pomp of the world's glory, and when the festive board of kings felt her influence, and admired her beauty ; still she was a captive.

If it is so no more among us, at least she receives a certain honour. But how great is the duty incumbent on her in that position ! Her zealous and chief ministers stand before the monarch, and have access to the palace,—what is the influence they exercise there ? Is it one of humility, earnestness, meekness, firmness, and self-denial ? Do they remember at all times their brethren which are in the world, intercede for them, and plead their cause against the wicked with the lip dry with fasting and the hands joined in sympathetic intercession ? Do they meet the enemies of the Church at the banquet of wine, and remember that they have no portion with them—no other aim than to subvert their designs and counteract their policy ? Do they recognise their brother—the poor, even though clad in the garb of the world's poverty, and sitting at the gate of the palace where *they* are honoured guests ? Do they realize a hundredfold more their companionship with the children of God than their connection with the rich, the brilliant or the noble ? Or does the pleasure of the world, the glory of the palace, the honour bestowed on them make them forget their holy city which is in ruins, and their brethren who lie

in captivity and oppression ? Do they sing the strange song in the strange land, or lament because they would not sing the LORD's song there ? Do they hang their harps on the willows, and think of Jerusalem as the city of their deep desire ?

Or more, do they help their brethren in captivity and sorrow, and hold out holy hands to communicate with them, by recognizing them as having more connection with them than with the world ; by the passage to and from Esther's chamber to the palace gate, by the fasting kept with them, and the earnest plea for their cause even though it be at the world's banquets ?

The Church is among us too much in thrall ; and through the bars of a dwelling too like a prison she is seen by us in matchless beauty. Her voice sounds on our ears too much as from the recesses of an inner chamber : too often conveyed to us through the mediation of those who roughen her accents and distort her meaning. Her form fleets by within as we stand and gaze ; we admire the loveliness of the King's daughter ; we see the waving of her garment of wrought gold—the robe of needlework—and we sigh that we may not

touch her more closely. Her visits to us are too much by permission ; here and there, now and then. Still she may prevail if she will. The voice of her ministers may be heard, if they will raise their pleading for her children in all lands, and subvert the machinations of her enemies throughout the world, so that the poorest and most persecuted of CHRIST's members may go forth to honour, as Mordecai ; and her enemies " fall into their own net which they have laid."

LXXI.

ELIJAH.—PART II.

THE DUTY OF FASTING.

1. KINGS XIX. 8.

**“AND HE AROSE, AND DID EAT AND DRINK, AND WENT
IN THE STRENGTH OF THAT MEAT FORTY DAYS AND
FORTY NIGHTS UNTO HOREB THE MOUNT OF GOD.”**

1. It is hardly possible to pass over the Old Testament characters, without adverting to the leading feature in that of Elijah the prophet, in which he finds a resemblance with so many others in the Mosaic Church: the practice of fasting and personal austerity for the sake of doing God's will. In short, there is scarcely a man whose life is recorded in the Old Testament, of whom it may not be said that he fasted and wept over sin; so that we are led to inquire anxiously whether this be not a duty, and

that in such a way as to make us feel very insecure if we never practise it.

Through the long hours of his intercourse with JEHOVAH the Law-giver suspended the natural supply of his appetite, and was among the first in whose case "forty days" became a penal period. In many a well-known passage in the Book of Psalms, as well as by the memorable sorrow into which he was plunged by the sickness of his child, we are reminded that "the man after God's own heart" looked on fasting as a duty. During that period which he spent in the wilderness, as the type of the messenger of the first Advent, Elijah fasted: and when, far from his native land, and surrounded only by objects which called to his memory the pomp of the proud Chaldean conqueror, Daniel fasted and lay absorbed in the contemplation of the Presence of a chastening God. So, too, we find it predicated of many prophets that they, in some way or other, abstained from the "pleasant bread" and the ordinary amusements of life. And when we read the New Testament, and contemplate him whose life was to embody the spirit of his teaching, we find that S. John Baptist spent the long years between his childhood and his middle age, not only in the desert, but with a

degree of personal austerity which would make the self-indulgent tremble. And after him, as if emulous of his austere example, the Apostle of the Gentiles underwent that mortification of the flesh, to which he appealed in his celebrated apology, as one of the signs of the sincerity of his conduct, and proof of the authenticity of his mission. S. Paul tells us plainly that he was "in fastings oft."

And after him, when the canon of the New Testament closes, one of the leading features of the Saints of God on earth in their intercourse with the world was that of fasting and self-denial. We are consequently led most seriously to consider this great practice which so marked the lives of the characters of the Old and New Testaments alike.

2. But it would be well, before I consider this subject in its more practical bearings, to bring before your notice those wider and wider circles which environ the duty of which I am treating. Too little regard is paid in general to the universal voice of mankind from the beginning, as an echo from the Voice of God, speaking through the moral sense; and heathen religions have been too much treated simply as such, and not as separate

portions of the vast fabric which God is raising into a single temple to His glory. Underground supports may be far out of sight to the ordinary eye, nevertheless, to the thoughtful and observant mind they are foundations of no small importance in sustaining the general fabric. Many reasons may have conduced to the neglect of this important view: amongst others, a want of viewing mankind as a whole, and ethnology, as an important element of religious education; to which may be added the unwillingness that many have shunned to acknowledge the system of *développement*, which according to God's visible Providence is clearly at work in every part of His designs. This has led to that shallow mode of treating the heathen tribes by our missionaries, which is sometimes manifested by the subversion of the whole foundations of religious instinct, which could alone be a secure basis for the superstructure of Christianity.

But this by the way. All the great religions of the world in past or present days were either a preparation of man for the Gospel, or a reflected image of that Gospel itself, through some distorting and refracting atmosphere. They bear their testimony severally to

the fuller truth to which they pointed, or with which they were co-existent; and they are as certain indications of the presence and substantial reality of the truth which they seem to reflect, as the shadow cast upon the wall by the rays of the lamp, is a certain indication of the presence of the substantial form which it represents. If then, throughout all these systems, past or present, we find any one leading idea, in the assertion of which, all consent, we may very fairly imagine that that idea is a safe indication of some principle whose substantial form is in the Church, and that it is at least the shadow of a reality.

In ancient days the great religions of Asia, expressed by the Chaldees and the Magi, put forward a truth, in their worship of fire and the heavenly bodies, suggestive of God as the Creator of the material universe, the Maker of things visible and invisible. One leading feature of the worship offered to the heavenly luminaries was the subjection of the body and the physical frame by fasting and self-denial. And when the mantle of the ancient fire-worshipper fell on Zoroaster, and the ruder suggestions of the day when Abraham was first called from Ur of the Chaldees became only more defined by

the minuter philosophers of Persia, the doctrine of the necessary subjection of the body was still more elaborately taught.

The conceptions of Greek mythology, suggested and necessitated the elevation of the human being to the divine nature, and in the heroes of the Iliad we have the shadows of that great truth which was to receive its full consummation hereafter, that man's perfection can only exist in his entire union with God. The mythology of the Greek was developed and enlarged by the philosophers of the same country, and Plato and Aristotle followed in the wake of others, who elaborated the idea that there was a God represented by the Creator, the Word and the Spirit; the union with Whom by moral virtue alone elevated man to his right position. This was a great step in the preparation of man for the Gospel. And here again, we are met with the fact, that the subjugation of the bodily passions and appetites by severe denials, was looked upon as necessary towards pleasing God.

Rome advanced in the wake of Greece, and made further applications of the philosophy of her mistress to the condition of mankind by so elevating the social state of the human race in

connection with herself, as to offer the noblest opportunity for those cementing influences of religion which the Greek had discovered ; and to prepare the world for the advent of Incarnate Deity. But Rome also taught self-sacrifice.

It is impossible to pass even in the most rapid review through these varied forms of the ancient religions of the world without being struck with the fact, that instead of being accidental blocks of heathenism cast here and there at random over the earlier ages, they were separate and incomplete stones, hewn out by the divine hand from the quarry of human nature, to occupy their own several parts in the foundation of the future edifice of Christianity.

But not only in the past, but in the present, there are colossal forms of religion which are scattered round us, outlying the limits of Christianity ; resemblances, no doubt of that great reality, whose outline they imitate, without receiving the light of heaven that illumines their types. The adherents of Buddhism which dwell on the steppes of central and eastern Asia are imitators of that theory of reverential worship and sacrifice, which Christianity teaches. Mahometanism, the scourge of the mediæval

Church, fringing the homes of catholicity with its intelligent hordes, recognizes the need of incarnate Deity, but exaggerates the results by a carnalised religion. The great masses of Northmen, who, by their superstitious practices declare their belief in the agency of the spiritual world; and lastly, the many tribes of more savage heathens bear witness to the necessity of personal suffering, in order to please God. All recognize fasting and physical subjugation as amongst the first duties required of them by their respective creeds.

It is impossible to pass by this great consentient voice of the past and of the present, sounding from the forest, the mountain, and the wilderness of so many climes, without feeling that we are solemnly called upon to consider the possible duty of fasting, and it would be alike monstrous as ignorant to assert that such creeds were false in this particular tenet; inasmuch as it is one of the points in which they are consentient with Christianity; and it is the point in which they have been transcended by so many of the followers of JESUS.

But passing them by, and contemplating the procession of Christians in their gradual advance to our own age, it is difficult not to be still

further arrested by the practice of our own brothers in faith. Passing over the enthusiastic efforts of some of the earlier devotees to the theory of self-sacrifice, Simeon, who for five and thirty years was parched upon the pillar by the frost and by the sun ; Anthony, who in his long hunger in the desert, declared that he saw the tempter, and wrestled with him in visible form ; or the cases of more than one who strove to fast through the forty days, or to transcribe Scripture without eating ; there are cases of earnest piety enough to arrest us. We cannot, however much we may differ in some respects, read of the tales of self-subjugation of multitudes distinguished for simple piety, without being startled from the torpor of our own self-indulgence. Geneviève the patroness of Paris, and Sebastian, the victim of the arrows, with the wounded side and the self-subjugated form ; Macarius the ascetic of Egypt, and our own Bede, poring over the page instinct with the preparations of prayer and fasting ; Chrysostom, in the long abstinences of his exile wanderings, and Borgia, crushing his appetite amid the palaces and diadems of Spain ; Fra Angelico, on his knees painting the Crucified, with the eye dimmed with the moisture of the long pre-

paration, and Palestrina counting it but natural to elaborate the heavenly strain by an imagination toned down with bodily suffering ; surely we cannot read of such, to say nothing of men nearer our own day,—the unknown, the despised, without feeling that there is an irresistible call upon us to consider the claims and the necessity of fasting. These are surely motives sufficiently urgent. Nor is this all, but when multitudes around us are practising the same denial, in many a home of wealth, in many a chamber of poverty ; all these are in themselves sufficient to make us gravely consider the responsibility of refusing to conform to a practice which has received the sanction of such high and holy authority.

3. But more. We have much that approaches to positive precept in holy Scripture ; passing by for the moment the appeal made to us by the fasting of our blessed LORD, which is intended for our example, as was every other act of His life on earth, we have more than one direct statement of His own, as to this duty, which it is impossible for any one to pass by who considers that Holy Scripture has any direct claim on our attention.

The memorable text, in which our blessed

LORD, in answer to the Jews, as to why the disciples of S. John fasted and they did not, bears directly on the point. Our LORD says, "When the bridegroom is taken away, then shall they fast," by which "taking away" of the bridegroom is clearly meant the departure of our blessed LORD, in bodily presence from this world. In this passage the original construction implies that the very day, or anniversary of our LORD's death, should be kept as a fast; so in the first chapter of Esther, "on those same days in which Ahasuerus had been once enthroned, he made a feast, &c.," implying *the anniversary*; and Philo the Jew, in his description of the practices of Christians, uses these very same words, in speaking of their yearly recurring feast: "in those very days," namely, of our LORD's crucifixion. And we find that after our LORD had departed, the Apostles immediately began the practice; as we are told of S. Paul, that he was "in fastings oft." Again, our blessed LORD in His sermon on the Mount, has given us direct rules for fasting. It would be false to imagine, that our blessed LORD would give rules for the practice of any virtue which was a matter of entire indifference to us. And this passage is

the more striking, inasmuch as the directions given on this head are immediately connected with those which are given as to another subject of primary importance—prayer.

A third passage which I refer to from our LORD's teaching, is in the case of the demoniac child. He chides His disciples, by telling them that they needed direct fasting to cast out that kind, saying, "that this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." These three passages, amongst others in our LORD's public teaching, enforced as they are by His own example in the desert, speak with arresting force to all Christians.

Such is the historic position of fasting.

4. But there are other aspects of it which are most important,—the spirit in which it should be pursued—the limits to which it should be conducted—the effect on ourselves, which should be the criteria and standards of its use to us individually. Elijah and those who stand with him in the vista of the long past, represent the historic form of the question. We find ourselves arrested by the calls of the Church and the practice of good men, as we look back to see what the history of men has been who feared God, and we find every person

marked by the adoption of this practice. Every one whom we have believed to be in heaven—every one whom we believe to be in the great multitude whom no man can number, has subdued his nature by this discipline. In the forefront of that army it was enforced by Moses, Elijah and David, Daniel and the prophets, who especially made this their practice. The Captain Who leads them, was He Who began His great example by the fast of the Forty Days. The stream of historic Christianity confirms the same impression. And those who have illustrated the moral history of Christianity have dwelt among us with this mark upon their countenances. The historic claim is strong enough.

In connection with other characters I will dwell hereafter on other portions of this great subject. It is, meantime, no small consideration that that company, members of which we delight to be, should be represented by men, every one of whom have practised a discipline which, communing personally with God, they have found so efficient, so necessary, and so blessed.

LXXII.

REBEKAH.

UNDUE NATURAL AFFECTION AND PARTIALITY IN PARENTS.

GEN. XXV. 28.

“AND ISAAC LOVED ESAU, BECAUSE HE DID EAT OF HIS VENISON ; BUT REBEKAH LOVED JACOB.”

1. WHILE the account of Rebekah in holy Scripture is so brief, that it would be difficult to draw many reflections from the study of her character ; her position is suggestive, and her conduct by no means without important practical results. She first comes before our notice, as the future wife of Isaac, and, in that capacity, at once attracts the interest of the student of the patriarchal age. When the steward of Abraham set out upon his mission to find a wife for Isaac, he went to Mesopotamia, the old country of Abraham, his master. Having reached that land, he made it a matter of

prayer to God, that He would guide him in the choice of the damsel by an external sign, dependant on the conduct of the next visitor to the well. Rebekah, the granddaughter of Abraham's brother, came to fetch water in her pitcher; her words and her conduct at once answered the token which the steward had suggested, and he proceeded to engage her interest by the gifts of bracelets and earrings. Struck by the magnificence of the gift and with the natural simplicity of a girl, Rebekah ran to tell her mother; and Laban, her brother, ran out to meet the steward of Abraham. Few things can be more beautiful in the description of the manners and customs of the early world than this account of Rebekah given in the 24th chapter of Genesis. The servant narrates the history of his mission, and the providential token, to Laban and Bethuel: and Rebekah is consigned to the care of the steward by her own choice.

The following description is given of her setting forth on her bridal journey:—

“Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and

let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken. And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth. And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebecca; he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things. And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master. And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go. And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master. And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth. And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go. And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them."

She found Isaac walking, meditating at eventide, and he received her into his tent. And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife—the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian, of Padanaram, the sister of Laban the Syrian. And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

The next we hear of her is in Gerar, where her beauty attracting the notice of the inhabitants, Isaac called her his sister. Esau's marriage became a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah, for he married a Hittite.

The next and hinging circumstance of Rebekah's life is the account of the deception passed upon his father by Jacob, at the suggestion of his mother. Isaac having asked for venison, "Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to

that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them."

2. Such was Rebekah. The character which we have brought before us by the preceding acts, is one, which to our eye, would wear the appearance of duplicity and self-seeking in a high degree; but placing aside for a moment, the impression which is thus forced upon us, it will be well to study the many practical suggestions which are started by reading Rebekah's life.

And first; this trait which I have just called duplicity, whatever it may be, belonged to the mother of Israel, and characterised each succeeding scion of her race. The Jew is essentially subtle. Rebekah marked her career by

suggesting an untruthful expedient to her unfaithful and favourite son ; he, without hesitation, accepted the suggestion, deceived his father and betrayed his brother ; and dealt with Laban with a degree of care for his own personal interest, which would make us more than hesitate as to the propriety of his conduct. The same inclination to shower an undue and erring affection on a favourite was transmitted from the mother to the son, and Jacob yearned with a similar partiality after Joseph, as Rebekah had done after himself. To the present day the race of Israel borrowing their lineage, as they do, from Rebekah, are marked, if by any one special feature, by the habit of deceit and wilfulness. In whatever degree this may be traceable to Rebekah and her son, it nevertheless is very clear that a parent's fault is constantly transmitted to its child and onward to successive generations.

More than this. If the parent yields to his natural disposition, he strengthens his own habit of evil and transmits to his descendants a nature more strongly inclined to the same evil ; whereas, if on the other hand, he succeeds in checking his own disposition, the result becomes apparent in the healthier moral condition

of his offspring. All this is very sad to contemplate, inasmuch as countless beings become responsible for the fault of one; but it is in accordance with the history of mankind, with the moral impressions of antiquity, and with distinct statements of divine revelation. The sin of Adam has affected his remotest descendant; the oft told tales of the Atreidæ and Œdipus remind us how strongly the heathen world was impressed with the belief that the sin of the parent predisposed the child for the committal of a similar fault, and became the cause of punishment to distant posterity; while the second commandment tells us in clear terms, that God visits the sins of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation. But it is not only to punishment, but the physical tendency to a definite form of immorality to which I specially refer.

It has been observed, with regard to the population of our own country, that in districts where certain crimes are prevalent, children are born with bodily constitutions and mental conformations, such as strongly to predispose the will to yield to the same faults of which the parents are guilty; and so remarkably is this the case, that in some places the

brevity of life and the rapid increase of the committal of crime are appalling ; and though perhaps in a less degree, the indulged fault of a parent is often seen to be the habitual condition of the child. How often we have noticed that the offspring of parents of intemperate habits, which, in themselves, were of very gradual formation, yield with facility and unresistingly to the same sins, as if they had a peculiar aptitude for them ; even the formed habit of lying produces the natural predisposition to exaggeration and false statement in the child, and the son of illegitimate affections often becomes himself the father of illegitimate offspring. This being the case, what a motive it offers to parents to check their own evil tendencies and to lead a godly and upright life.

Rebekah's fault was perpetuated to onward centuries ; and the wilfulness of overweening affection—mingled with a disregard to truthfulness, has marked the descendant of Israel down to the day we live in. So pride, vanity, extravagance, uncharitableness of judgment or opinion, though but perhaps a slight intentional offence in father or mother, may receive severe penalties inflicted on the descendants of the third and fourth generation.

How striking to see the pride of aristocracy, though perhaps resulting from some acts of which a man may be proud, inherited by a child who has nothing on which to plume himself, except the fact of being descended from a parent who earned for himself his position and his titles. Yet we are frequently called upon to see this condition of childhood, the result of the indulged temper and feeling of the parent.

3. But the character of Rebekah is suggestive in other ways; she indulged favouritism, and, like a mother, loved her youngest son the best. Partiality of this kind is either selfishness or worse. If it simply flows from an actual preference, it is selfish to yield to it; if, as it often does, it springs from noticing a reflection of self in the child of our partiality, it becomes idolatry, or the worshipping of self in another shape. God never intended such exercise of choice in the parent.

Natural affection was implanted in us as an aid to the fulfilment of those duties which are necessary to our wellbeing and existence; and the exercise of those affections selfishly, and at our own choice, becomes at least a subversion of the intentions of Providence, and a substi-

tution of our own wills for that of God'; and yet of how common a fault am I now speaking ! In Rebekah's case it was permitted to be hereditary. Jacob loved Joseph with an overweening affection ; and Joseph, Manasseh. In the case of Joseph, the well-known story at once reveals the punishment which was wreaked, by God's permission, on the head of the child who had been too much loved. Nor does this seem entirely to have been the limit of Rebekah's fault ; she appears to have recognized a kind of antagonism with her husband Isaac in her love for her youngest son. We often see that the undue and unfair love of a parent in Rebekah's position is permitted to end in family dissension and the breach of conjugal duties.

The point that I have in view in urging this is, that the results of this conduct in Rebekah should lead us to see that God has fixed His condemnation on this kind of tendency. If we desire to see the harm which attaches itself to favouritism, we have but to look at the upset which it gives to the equipoise of the arrangements of the family or larger societies ; the quarrels, envyings, heart-burnings, and reproachings, of which it becomes the rapid cause ; and we shall not wonder at the condemna-

tion which God seems to have passed upon it ; nay, we shall even wonder that so many instances exist as do, without more signal punishment ; placing aside the evils that result to family life. Nor is this true only in family life. There have been sufficient instances in the history of the governments of the world, and especially in the kings of our own and a neighbouring country, to make us start at the disorganization produced by the unequal application of our own predilections to those objects to which God would apply the equal arrangements of His own moral government. In brief, favouritism is the idolatry of self.

4. But there is another lesson which Rebekah teaches us, which we cannot pass by ; the way in which intense and partial affection blinds the eye to pure morality. Rebekah's love for Jacob was so great that she betrayed her husband for the sake of securing the birth-right for her younger son ; and she infringed God's law by indulging in deceitfulness. The forms of morality and religion are in themselves clear, keen, and definite, even as the statue carved from the hardest marble ; but between our eye and those forms it is easy enough to let mists arise so blinding and deceiving as wholly to change the appearance

of the form which we are gazing at. This is especially the case with regard to the forms of truthfulness. Extreme affection for Jacob made Rebekah feel herself justified in teaching him to call the kid, venison, and himself, Esau. We cannot imagine she fully and consciously did wrong—knowing it to be wrong. She had got into the way of arguing that her first duty was the promoting the interest of her child; and that any act which tended towards its accomplishment was justifiable, and any fault justifiable which had the same end in view. The question is, whether we shall consider the great objective and external laws of God to be the final barriers of our moral action, or our own interior affections and impulses—however righteous, and pure, and good. If we make the latter our standard, it is impossible to say where we shall land the vessel of our soul; we must at last become Gods to ourselves. We should always tremble when we find that, owing to the strong regard we bear to another, we are inclined to overpass those limits which most men around us fear to approach. We may imagine that we see reason and justification for doing so, but we may rely on it that we have reason from that moment to be anxious as to

our condition before God and the judgment which awaits us. This danger ramifies. A predominant inclination may lead us in the estimate we form of others to untruthfulness in our judgment of characters ; we may be inclined rather to decide on what is true and right from what we admire in men, than to determine what is beautiful in them by the external laws of truth and right.

Rebekah's character suggests to us the importance of carefully observing the simple guidings of Providential arrangements, and the continual temptations to stray from them.



LXXIII.

DELILAH.

FALSE AFFECTION.

PROVERBS XII. 4.

**"A VIRTUOUS WOMAN IS A CROWN TO HER HUSBAND:
BUT SHE THAT MAKETH ASHAMED IS AS ROTTEN-
NESS IN HIS BONES."**

1. DELILAH'S character though but briefly drawn is not without terrible significance. In her we see a violation of the ties of life and properly-poised natural affection which makes us start; and yet by many among us this fault is committed and scarcely considered to be a fault.

The whole narrative is fraught with suggestions tending to arrest and appal the sinner in his way and to make him think.

Samson goes down to the valley of Sorek

and loves a woman, Delilah ; and his love for her is at once made a trap by his enemies, who are on the look out for the opportunity to ruin him. He falls into the trap, and yields himself to her fascinations. She plies her art, and urges him to deliver his great secret into her power. He not only hesitates, but he misleads her ; he knew what was in woman, and his own greatness despised her weakness and treachery too much to permit him to resist or reprove it openly. There is a bitter irony about his acts : he not only views her as beneath contempt, but also as exercising a cunning and subtlety which authorised him in outwitting her. He had fathomed her character,—he had seen the lurking motives which impelled it, and he laughed. Still he loved her. He used her as his tool,—his mere tool, as she was using him.

She first tried to bind him with the seven green withs. “ And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee. And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man. Then the lords of the Philistines brought

up to her seven green withs which had not been dried, and she bound him with them. Now there were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he brake the withs, as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known."

Then she pleads her case: she complains of his mockery of her with an apparent artlessness which might throw off the recollection of the mockery she was playing off on him. But he is up to her, and again deceives her. He bids her try the new ropes, which she does with similar success.

"And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold, thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man. Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And there were liars in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arms like a thread."

She now pleads more strongly : "Thou hast told me lies,"—and she tries the web. But here too she is deceived. He gets up, and goes safe away.

"And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me, and told me lies : tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, if thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web. And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and with the web."

She now presses him sore, and says, "How canst thou say that thou lovest me?" She wore him out with importunity, and he told her all. The strong man was beaten out of his stronghold—contempt and irony could do no more. He wearied of playing a part, and under pressure he yielded. He yielded to his destruction. In an instant woman's attentive eye detected the sincerity and truth of the last answer, and the voice of pretended affection cried out to his enemies, "Come up, for he hath showed me all his heart."

"And it came to pass, when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so

that his soul was vexed unto death ; that he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine head ; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb : if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath showed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand. And she made him sleep upon her knees ; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head ; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

And so he fell.

2. We hardly know a case of more affecting and heartless treachery. Under the guise of love and in the apparently trusting confidence of affection a man is induced to tell a secret

which he commits to the care of another. The effort to extort it is made over and over again and each time a stronger protestation is uttered of affection and regard. He yields,—and is given over to a dreadful death which his betrayer was aware of from the beginning. There is a mixture of treachery, hypocrisy, cruelty, and perseverance about the whole which is remarkable. Yet is the case so uncommon after all? Is there no deep lesson taught by it which multitudes among us need to read?

“ I know thy trains,
Though dearly to my cost, thy gins, and toils ;
Thy fair enchanted cup, and warbling charms
No more on me have power, their force is null'd,
So much of adder's wisdom I have learn'd
To fence my ear against thy sorceries.
If in my flower of youth and strength, when all men
Loved, honoured, fear'd me, thou alone couldst hate me
Thy husband, slight me, sell me, and forego me ;
How wouldst thou use me now, blind and thereby
Deceivable, in most things as a child.
Helpless then easily contemned, and scorned,
And last neglected ? How wouldst thou insult,
When I must live uxorious to thy will
In perfect thralldom, how again betray me,
Bearing my words and doings to the lords
To gloss upon, censuring, frown or smile ?
This jail I count the house of liberty
To thine, whose doors my feet shall never enter.”

Before examining these circumstances, remember, we are not now dwelling on Samson's characteristics, though his irony throughout is exceedingly fine, and as a study very admirable. One word, however, connected with his part in the proceedings I may say in passing: there is something more suggestive about the sorrows brought on by intercourse with the "strange woman," and the terrible results of a passion so falsely called love, than many around us may be inclined to imagine. The description given by the wise man floats quickly to memory:

"A gracious woman retaineth honour: and strong men retain riches. The merciful man doeth good to his own soul: but he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh. The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward. As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death."

Delilah's conduct has few parallels in Scripture. It is a fearful contradiction,—treachery and hypocrisy stand amongst its foremost features; conspiring with others and those cruel and vindictive foes against one who trusted her, is a strong aggravation of the evil. The viola-

tion of the secrecy and reliance placed in the sanctuary of home is ever revolting to our feelings ; and the effort to extort a secret under the guise and pretence of affection is only exaggerated in this case by the fact of him whom she betrayed, and to whom she professed this regard, occupying the position of one closely connected with her.

Now it would be scarcely worth while to dwell on a character like Delilah's were it not that it bears on a certain condition of things among ourselves which we continually have brought under notice, especially among our poor,—the determination to defend and protect at all hazards, through evil report and good report, the husband and near relative from the mere fact of his close relationship. We are familiar with the circumstance ; and it presents a contrast with the acts of the woman under our notice ; although, I grant, at the same time it often suggests difficulties to ourselves to know how to treat persons whose prominent features are so beautiful and attractive, when the deeper lines of the character may perplex us by an indifference about truth—the glory of God, and the zeal needful for His service, which deviation such a line of uncompromising

affection and defence necessitates. We long to admire and delight in the nobility of such self-sacrifice, such unselfish devotion to the cause of those with whom the joys and sorrows of life are shared. But while we so delight in the motive impulse, we are sometimes afraid lest, as conservators of morality and obedience to God's law, we should forego the imperative claims of the latter. Such cases often come before us in our intercourse with parish life.

Few expressions of it are more illustrative of the feeling I refer to than that which has been indelibly fixed on the page of our own classical literature by our great dramatist in the death of Desdemona, whose love for Othello mastered not only the consciousness of her own wrongs and sufferings, but even made her in the last moments forego the claims of *truth* for his sake; and affection triumphed in her lovely character over the sincerity and simplicity which ever having marked her conduct had stood so luminously out against the deep shadows of Iago's villany.

"A guiltless death I die."

"O, who hath done

This deed?"

"Nobody, I myself; farewell,
Commend me to my kind lord. O, farewell." [*Dies.*]

"Why, how should she be murdered?"

"Alas, who knows?"

"You heard her say herself, it was not I."

"She said so: I must needs report the truth."

"She's, like a liar, gone to burning hell;

'Twas I that kill'd her."

"O, the more angel she,

And you the blacker devil!"

While it is hardly possible to pass by the somewhat similar utterance of devotion equally unselfish, yet perhaps a little tending towards an exaggerated estimate of the virtues of one who had injured her, in the speech of Queen Catherine to Henry VIII.

"Sir, I desire you, do me right and justice;
And to bestow your pity on me; for
I am a most poor woman, and a stranger,
Born out of your dominions; having here
No judge indifferent, nor no more assurance
Of equal friendship and proceeding. Alas, sir,
In what have I offended you? what cause
Hath my behaviour given to your displeasure,
That thus you should proceed to put me off,
And take your good grace from me? Heaven witness,
I have been to you a true and humble wife,
At all times to your will conformable:
Ever in fear to kindle your dislike,
Yea, subject to your countenance; glad, or sorry,

As I saw it inclin'd. When was the hour,
I ever contradicted your desire,
Or made it not mine too? Or which of your friends
Have I not strove to love, although I knew
He were my enemy? What friend of mine
That had to him deriv'd your anger, did I
Continue in my liking? nay, gave notice
He was from thence discharg'd? Sir, call to mind
That I have been your wife, in this obedience,
Upward of twenty years, and have been blest
With many children by you: If, in the course
And process of this time, you can report,
And prove it, too, against mine honour aught,
My bond to wedlock, or my love and duty,
Against your sacred person, in God's name,
Turn me away; and let the foul'st contempt
Shut door upon me, and so give me up
To the sharpest kind of justice."

But illustrations of this kind of character with which we are familiar are frequent around our daily path. A poor woman has a drunken husband, he spends his money on selfish gratification while she starves. He leaves her to strive in vain to allay the craving hunger and bitter wail of children crushed by want, poverty, and dirt. He laughs and sings amid companions in the lighted tavern; while she rocks the sleeping baby and hums sad memories of Mayday tunes, when cowslips were yellow in the gleaming grass, or happy blackbirds sang

upon the spray. The rushlight gleams on the pale wall but to bring out the dingy spectral forms of broken furniture,—an old oak chest, or shattered windsor chairs. The husband returns ; his dreaded footstep is heard advancing through the still midnight lane. Her wan face grows paler, and yet with woman's fidelity she loves the sound of that dreaded footstep still. He lifts the latch ; the tools are hurled into the corner : a muttered oath is audible though addressed to none ; he throws himself into the vacant chair, and draws off his boots ; he seizes his pipe, while his inflamed breath speaks of the tap room or the gin shop. She sits silent rocking the unconscious partner of her joys and woes, and plying her busy needle to mend her husband's clothes. The silence hitherto unbroken is broken now by a curse at the absence of supper, and an oath hurled against her whose blighted fortunes are written on the countenance. That oath is meekly borne, and the blow or the kick which may follow received as quietly and submissively. And so the veil of midnight or early morning hour drops its shadowy folds over the scene, which itself a repetition of the past month, is to be repeated through the next, and which no

human eye witnesses, and few hearts of the opulent and prosperous imagine.

And you call to-morrow,—utter a word which may infer that that husband is a drunkard, or that the squalid face and ragged beggary in any way proceeds from him,—aye ! do it in the gentlest lightest terms which human voice can syllable ; and the drunkard's advocate, the indignant repudiator of the charge against him, the stern and jealous assertor of his freedom from blame will be that pale victim whom he swore at and kicked last night.

This is heroism, and this is the contradictory to Delilah.

A youth has seduced a girl from the paths of virtue and modesty. The affection which had reared its frail form on a foundation of ice, flows away when the foundation has melted. The promises oft repeated, the vows so solemnly made, the ignorance, in which she was, of the reality of the sin, the fuller knowledge he possessed,—are pleas in vain put forward. But circumstances compel the union ; her blighted virtue trusts in the refuge of a home of her own, and in the hope that in domestic life she will find a shelter which she found not in the world, or at the dishonoured hearth of her

parents ; while the memory of former affections starts up to support her expectations. Coldness and indifference, neglect and severity, the long cheerless evening, or the conviction that she is viewed only as the minister to the wants of the passing hour, gradually break up her mind and crush her spirit ; still she loves. A profligate course, brings the partner of her forsaken and dishonoured life to an early end. The home deserted in health is the one solace of illness ; and the objects loathed before stand out, the only ones which can cheer the failing hour. The neglected companion of life is there. The watchful night and the sleepless day become her natural duty—her willing offering. She toils unselfishly in the atmosphere of illness, difficult for even love not sometimes to slacken under. She is the wife ; *that* she never forgets. The past is all forgotten, all forgiven ; the years of cold neglect, the seduction from the path of honour. She defends his failings, and denies his faults. She is only angry when he is assailed, and happy when he is praised. His defects and errors were only misfortunes ; his greatest fall the result of ignorance. He dies, and she is desolate : she scrapes together the tattered or rejected

mourning dress of others, and in respect to his memory walks behind his parish coffin with her little one by the hand. She passes the idle throng at the churchyard gate, and to show that *she* at least honoured that unnoticed dust, she lifts up her voice at the grave, and weeps ; while her child, catching the " trick of grief," turns from its wondering gaze upon the crowd, and staring in its mother's face, cries too. She returns to mourn in a silent home, and to respect an empty chair.

This is heroism : it is the contradictory of Delilah.

A man tempted by evil companions, robs a henroost, steals turnips, or joins in a burglary. He has been silent and reserved : the secret of his heart has been trenched further and further back from the anxious observation of his wife. His manner has been colder each day as her most natural and justifiable anxiety begged and begged in vain for the revelation of that secret which she knows too well lies heavy on the heart. But the tale is never told. The friend, that comes to the door under the shadow of night, under the shadow returns unseen. The silent anxious face which leans over the fire ; the wakeful nights ; the talking in dreams ;

the restlessness on the pillow; the irritable temper he shows to children, the only objects which ever drew out the tender word or the affectionate expression; all tell the story. The policeman comes, and the secret is revealed. He goes, silent, sullen, reserved, while she weeps honest, unmeasured tears upon the breast on which she lay in happy youth. In prison she visits him. She defends his character when assailed at home. She begs the village round to pay for "a counsel," and carries her hard got two guineas eked out by her own denial to buy the wretched pleading which mocks advocacy. And when he is transported for fourteen years, she entreats for means to follow him, will follow him anywhere; and does.

This is heroism, this is the contradictory to Delilah.

These scenes are not uncommon or unknown to those who watch the life and habits of our people. They are scenes which occur continually in the narrowest spheres of parochial life. There *are* scenes which represent the contradictories to it all. There are Delilahs among us.

3. What then is the history of these feelings?

these sad perversions of rectitude, what the remedies which we will apply to them?

Love like this we have seen in the records of Holy Scripture. Though Absalom had rebelled against his father, broken up the peace of his family by gross criminality, leagued with his enemies, roused the wild force of rebellion against the king, ejected him as a wanderer and an exile up the Mount of Olives; nevertheless David forgot every fault in the power of absorbing love, and charged Joab not to let a hair of his head be touched; and when he died, his exceeding bitter cry from the gate rose echoing to remotest time as the proverb and byword of passionate grief. So love overbore the mother's claim for her child at the throne of Solomon; and rather than see it die, she would let it grow by a stranger's side.

What faults of early childhood, what neglect of later youth were remembered by "Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah," in that cold night when upon the frosty ground the corpses of her children lay exposed, and the dark bird of prey sailed scared above the carrion?

No; while the tale of Delilah stands recorded on one page of history, on the other stands that of David and Rizpah, and the records of a

natural affection which saw no faults in the objects of love, go far to outweigh the narrative of Delilah's perfidy.

4. And this leads us into this important inquiry—What is the object of these intense natural affections? Are they intended to blind the eyes to the faults of those we love? Are they meant to sit in the throne of human judgment and with an eye too kindly partial grasp the sceptre which the blinded figure of justice would otherwise direct? No; nevertheless by the universal consent of the moral sense of mankind the conduct of Delilah is condemned with execration, and that of the women whose cases I supposed just now, admired, honoured, and loved. They may be partially in error; no doubt they are, but the question is, which *tendency* is right?

The very object of strong natural affections—those of the mother for her offspring, and of the wife for the husband—is to give a tendency or prejudice which may, to a certain degree, supersede the *mere* dictum of justice. We are too weak, too frail, to endure the latter only. “If Thou, LORD, shalt be extreme to mark what we have done amiss, O LORD, who may abide it?” And if we cannot stand at His tribunal neither

can we endure man's ignorant and partial judgment, when there is no counter impulse given by some other prejudicing principle. I say it with reverence; the Justice of God is tempered by the Love of the Incarnation, and the stern decree of bare judgment is toned down or reversed by the examination of motives and impulses, circumstances and temptations, which He alone can do "Who knoweth our frames, and remembereth we are but dust." What natural affections are in us, as a counter force to bare abstract justice, that the Love of Jesus manifested through the Incarnation is in God. So though he still hesitated to accept the condition of self-sacrifice, when "He saw" the young ruler He loved him. So though from its streets the cries of impiety and ingratitude arose, when "He saw Jerusalem He wept over it." So when the Pharisee recorded with abstract justice the acts of "the woman who was a sinner," He uttered the never-forgotten words, "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace." And it is this which is the office of *natural affection* in us. It gives a strong impulse in favour of, not adverse to, the defendant. It retains counsel in his behalf: nay, more, it pays the fee, and pleads with matchless eloquence. It sifts the

whole case, desirous to find the extenuating circumstances. It discovers and brings to light every palliating fact; acts the advocate, not the judge; the counsel, not the witness; and when the favourable verdict is gained, it walks forth before the acquitted one from the court, raising the song of triumph and gratulation, rejoicing with him who rejoices, and making his joy its own.

And when justice decides that the extenuating circumstance is not enough to acquit, it forces itself on the forlorn and forsaken, goes out of court with the condemned criminal, sits by his side in mournful attitude in the cell, sings sweet words of sympathy through the dreary hours of punishment, "weeps with him who weeps," and makes his sorrows its own.

Ay, it sits through the night to gaze upon a corpse, and though all forsake, yet does not it: wanders like a pale shade round the forgotten grave, and casts a shadow as of an untiring watcher over the cold marble of him whose dust lies dishonoured by the world, forsaken by friends, unnoticed by the passing traveller on life's highway, and only treasured and guarded by the lingering sentinel of *natural affection*.

And it does its part well. We can so little

trust the keen eye of the most impartial justice. We need to see with some other eye. None looks so deeply as that of affection. No eye of the practised mediciner sees more keenly when disease or danger lurks in the form, as that of sincere love. No scientific knowledge is so successful as that of the truly affectionate, to detect and crush the embryo ill in human action. It lets nothing escape which can defend, justify, palliate, save. Its object and aim,—its *interest* is to defend from false blame ; to detect palliating circumstances ; to discover motives which may extenuate. And do we not need that protective power ? Are any of us sufficiently fair judges of one another to allow of our demanding a state of society without the protecting influence of this strong and mighty advocate ?

In the words of our great dramatist :

“ Your brother is a forfeit of the law,
And you but waste your words.”

“ Alas ! alas !

Why all the souls that were, were forfeit once ;
And He that might the vantage best have took,
Found out the remedy ; how would you be,
If He, which is the top of judgment, should
But judge you as you are ? O ! think on that ;
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
Like man made new.”

“Be you content :

It is the law, not I, condemns your brother :
Were he my kinsman, brother, or my son,
It should be thus with him ;—he must die to-morrow.”

“To-morrow ? O, that’s sudden ! spare him, spare him :
He’s not prepared for death ! Even for our kitchens
We kill the fowl of season ; shall we serve heaven
With less respect than we do minister
To our gross selves ? Good, good, my lord, bethink you :
Who is it that hath died for this offence ?
There’s many have committed it.”

This is wisdom. This is truth. Without the pleading voice of natural affection, our condition of society would be one-sided—intolerable. There would be one judgment for the poor and another for the rich. There would be influence exercised through the power of wealth and position, which would overwhelm those who lacked them. Many a child would descend to a dishonoured grave ; many a parent would have the felon’s name sculptured on his tomb ; many a friend would sink under a withering censure, a false, an unjust imputation from hard inexorable men, who do not stay to think while they wield the sceptre of justice, that they might have fallen still more readily, if the same temptation had befallen them ; and that it may have been the influence of circumstances

only which led to an act in another of which they have not been guilty themselves. Justice needs the tempering influences, the softening advocacy of a strong plea on the side of the accused, to arrest its too speedy decision, or to remove impressions which its verdict may have left.

If then this position of natural affection be a provision of Providence, an arrangement made for this definite purpose, we may not safely ignore it, we may not strive to act without it, nor undervalue, nor criticise it severely, when we do see it exist. We should let its influence have effect and do its work, and believe that in doing so we are meeting the designs of God.

5. And first, this principle of action will make us *value, not despise, the existence and exercise of natural affections*. There is a class of persons among us who think it their duty to follow their inclination in despising the power and presence of natural feelings. Without the power to realise those feelings themselves, they try others by some act of self-suppression and severance from the ties of life which have marked the lives of some saints of days gone by, whose cases, many at least, were peculiar in

circumstances, or the result of some singularity of disposition. They insist on every one being cut by the same rule, judged of by the same standard; and cast discredit upon those who under the influence of high feelings, lead a life less obtrusive, perhaps, and remarkable for its keen and chiselled peculiarity, yet, nevertheless, under the full influence of those original good tendencies. Such men act, if they act on any conscious reason at all, on the supposition that kindly affections are not of God, and are weak and essentially evil.

Now to say nothing of the strong probability that such persons from some peculiar formation lack these affections in any even ordinary force, and being unable to feel their force themselves, are utterly unable to appreciate them in others, it would be right to turn their attention to the expression of human perfection in our Blessed Lord's Nature. Here at least we have the full expression of what is well pleasing to God. And here we find the very fullest recognition of those feelings which He possessed in common with ourselves. His tender solicitude and care for His Mother; His sympathy in feeling and manner even where He knew that the act would presently

remove entirely the cause of sorrow ; His words of tenderness to the widow of Nain though He knew that one word would presently raise her son from the dead ; His recognition of Mary and Martha's love for Lazarus,—all show that He did not ignore the powers of natural affection, and that He before Whom we must stand in judgment is one Who will remember the frame with which He endowed us, and the tendencies He gave to direct us.

But not only is the existence of these feelings to be *recognised*, but they are to be brought to *practical account*. And here is the point which consideration of Delilah's conduct brings us to. She used her position and relationship to Samson as an opportunity of effecting his ruin. She made love the veil of deep design. She delivered over bound to his enemies the man who lay sleeping and trusting on her bosom. Had Samson been to her even an enemy as he was to his persecutors, she would have been indefensible. Those whose characters I sketched in contrast, the frequent instances of the injured wives of our poor stand out in noble contrast.

They are right.

A wife's aim should be always to be the

advocate for her husband, never the witness against him, or the judge who condemns him. If ever the voice of pleading be heard from her lips it must distil the silver eloquence of pleading affection, never the harsh discord of condemnation. She is born his advocate ; she was retained on her marriage-day his perpetual counsel in the court of the world. She has her brief, it is filled with *his* cause, not the cause of his adversary. If his adversary strive to suborn her witness, her observant eye, her bribed espionage, she indignantly and righteously recoils from the base suggestion. She has her retaining fee ; “ Do you take me for a Delilah ? ” The man who shall be so low and base, so mean, so dastardly, so ignoble as to attempt to work like the Philistines, through a wife, deserves at least to fall crushed beneath the same ruin they try to bring upon the head of their victim,—and they will. God will never prosper them—religion can never endorse them.

But more,—we should in every way encourage those who are pursuing that line of self-devotion and unselfish affection by showing them how beautiful we esteem their conduct, and how well it may be the stepping-stone to higher self-sacrifice to Him Who yearns for

their heart's devotion! How important to enable such characters to feel that they have in their hearts germs of that heavenly sowing which, if they will leave them open to God's rain and sunshine will produce soon an abundant harvest. We should lead them to work on from nature to grace, and clothe the form of natural loveliness with the mantle of heavenly grace. Their altar may be inscribed "To the unknown God." How happy to teach them how to inscribe it to Him "Whom to know is everlasting Life!" How important whenever we do see an inclination to violate the holy jealousy of affection which I have been referring to, to resist *at once* the tendency and to make a woman feel that we shrink from the word or the expression of countenance which may indicate that the first object of domestic life is not to protect and be jealous for the sharer of life's trials and happinesses—weal and woe.

Beautiful when this is believed,—when the force of affection is such that as a star it shines so clearly as to pale all other lights, and to prevent the fires of blame and condemnation from being seen or noticed. To realise such a love, that despite every fault and infirmity,

every feeling of natural disposition, every wayward humour, all is forgotten in the one desire to offer comfort in the hour of sorrow or repentance—a refuge when the world is cold—a home when all else is desolate. This is beautiful!

LXXIV.

TOBIT.

THE COMBINATION OF FEELING AND THE SENSE OF DUTY.

S. MATT. x. 16.

“BEHOLD, I SEND YOU FORTH AS SHEEP IN THE
MIDST OF WOLVES: BE YE THEREFORE WISE AS
SERPENTS, AND HARMLESS AS DOVES.”

1. THERE is a charm about many of the characters of the Apocryphal Books which it is hard to analyze, though impossible to be indifferent to. Among them I know of none so remarkable as that of Tobit. No one hears his character read without feeling strangely attracted towards it, yet the reason of the attraction is hard to assign.

The beauty of it consists in a certain simplicity of life and manners, mingled with a half-

suppressed and touching expression of feeling which charms and fascinates us. In the sacred tale we hear of men—evidently good, manly and noble, daring to speak out those very feelings and natural principles which all are realising, yet few have the courage to express.

Among all the sacred narratives whose incidents and characters peculiarly express this feeling, few are more replete with it than that of Tobit. We all feel the charm of the narrative when in autumn we return to the touching lessons. We ever remember Tobit and his wife waiting for the return of their son,—the long expectation,—the open window,—the blind eyes,—the exquisite toning down of the utterance of love.

Now before I go further to analyze the history of this feeling, or find parallels among ourselves, I will give some of those passages which seem especially to produce it. The opening description of Tobit's care for the dead, shadows it forth.

“When I saw abundance of meat, I said to my son, Go and bring what poor man soever thou shalt find out of our brethren, who is mindful of the Lord; and, lo, I tarry for thee. But he came again, and said, Father, one of

our nation is strangled, and is cast out in the marketplace. Then before I had tasted of any meat, I started up, and took him up into a room until the going down of the sun. Then I returned, and washed myself, and ate my meat in heaviness, remembering that prophecy of Amos, as he said, Your feasts shall be turned into mourning, and all your mirth into lamentation. Therefore I wept : and after the going down of the sun I went and made a grave, and buried him. But my neighbours mocked me, and said, This man is not yet afraid to be put to death for this matter : who fled away ; and yet, lo, he burieth the dead again."

Again, the well-known return of Tobias, adds another touch to the picture.

"Now Anna sat looking about toward the way for her son. And when she espied him coming, she said to his father, Behold, thy son cometh, and the man that went with him. Then said Raphael, I know, Tobias, that thy father will open his eyes. Therefore anoint thou his eyes with the gall, and being pricked therewith, he shall rub, and the whiteness shall fall away, and he shall see thee. Then Anna ran forth, and fell upon the neck of her son,

and said unto him, Seeing I have seen thee, my son, from henceforth I am content to die. And they wept both."

The power of this description seems to exist in a certain suppressed poetry, whose subject-matter is the natural affections and impulses of domestic and daily life: the full recognition of these, and at the same time that reserved expression of them which leaves much to the suggestion of the reader. It is like a luminous atmosphere through which the light of some glorious body shines, but yet so subdued and mellowed as to suggest rather than reveal its existence; and which charms the eye and mind by the mere fact of its intervention.

In these holy narratives and passages there is a continual recognition of the guidance and providence of God, and yet in such a way as to lead the reader to look on it rather as the necessary thread which unites the acts of men's lives, than any line separate from the regular detail of their existence.

But there is another cause of this quiet beauty, the co-existence of natural feelings in all their force and expression with the high worldwise and heroic daring of men who occupy the front rank of their day among those who influence

and direct mankind. The king does not forget his father—the patriarch remembers the dying hours of his aged parent; nor only remembers these things, but also recognizes them as the moving impulse of all actions. There is always something arresting in this. Few objects affect us more sensibly than the manifestation of natural affection through the rude guise of the rough and uneducated labourer, or the continual recognition of God as the guide and guard of every action of life by those who *seem* by their own energy and power alone to be able to direct and control its events.

2. All this is true in the history of Tobit. There are other well known occasions in Scripture in which we are affected by similar emotions, where the combination of simplicity and grandeur conspire to form the truly pathetic. Amongst others the scene between Abraham and the angels at his tent door is one. The recognised influence of nature; the august position of the patriarch; the tent in the wilderness; the boundless realms of ruddy desert which spring away towards the east; the patriarch's wife at the door; these seen in contrast with the military power of Abraham,

his young men fresh from victorious battle, and the majesty and silence of the angelic company just having descended from heaven, and walked across the plain, strike every reader. They affect with a slight feeling of melancholy pleasure. The impression is very beautiful, and I imagine this beauty consists in the combination of two elements of human life and the full and natural recognition of both, which are rarely so fully and unreservedly expressed, and with so little consciousness as in the tales before us : I mean the elements of natural and formed life, disposition and character, personal and official history.

Again, no pathos can exceed the force of that which is conveyed by the narrative of Joseph and his brethren ; the mixture of simplicity and magnificence, of natural feeling and official character, the unreserved display of the impulses of nature, manifested by the members of one family. Many men would drop a veil over the one side of the human character, while others would reveal the natural impulses at the expense of the dignity and independence of the public man. It is the union of the two which is so eminently beautiful.

The tale of David and Absalom,—the sor-

row of the father and the rebellion of the son, form a background of singular force, before which the figure of David the king and the soldier passes with dignity and power. Few historians would dare so completely to have given both sides to the picture, or had they dared would have feared the result. Their object would have been to represent the hero; and the entire expression of the human being would have been inconsistent with the idea of the hero. Nature best makes her own heroes, and the effort to amend is but to spoil her type.

The same harmony exists in the early life of Samuel,—the narrative of the maternal affection of Hannah, the simple answer of the youth to the midnight Voice, and the listening attention of Eli. The records which we have of the lives and acts of many of the kings and prophets,—Hezekiah on his sick bed,—Josiah in his interviews with the prophetess Huldah, and his reverence for God's law,—the pathetic remonstrances of Jeremiah, and his sufferings,—the simple yet magnificent attitude of Daniel in his captivity.

The Apocryphal Books carry on the same train of thought and feeling—Tobit, his family afflictions, and his simple sense of duty,—

Judith, and her mixture of the woman and the heroine,—the patriotism and religion of the Maccabees.

To a great degree this feature ceases in the narratives of the New Testament. However full of exquisite feeling, the tales of S. Peter and Mary Magdalene do not inspire us with exactly the same kind of sensation which the histories do to which I have just referred. The feeling is deeper ; more the result of experience, more disciplined, less intuitive. It is as the deep glow of sunset when compared with the softer light of dawn ; we weep or we rejoice over the pictures brought before our eye of the penitent apostle in the porch, or the silent watcher on the hill side and the sepulchre. We sink our vessel into deep waters. We are hardly conscious of the pathos which has touched us when we read the histories of the Old Testament. I mention this to suggest a solution, not for the purpose of instituting a comparison. The solution of this question may to a certain degree throw light on the position which the narrative of Tobit holds among those instructive histories of Scripture which are read for the formation of life and manners.

The difference between the two consists in just that difference which exists between the simple and disciplined feeling,—between the feeling of childhood and that of the formed character,—the light of morning and that of afternoon. We have different impressions of childhood and manhood. There is a touching force in the acts and expressions of the former which is not existing in the latter. The feeling excited by the latter may be deeper, it is not so intuitive. There is ever a pensive shade thrown over our view of children's acts and ways,—a sweet sadness which while it evokes the tear may also cause a smile. How touching their imitations of greater things, their effort to be what they cannot realize! How affecting the memorials of children when they have passed away,—the ruins of their toys, the twigs which constructed the mimic fireplace beneath the elm tree of the field! How intuitively sweet to us, yet somewhat sad, their earnest and inquiring gaze, when we are beaten by the storms of life,—the simplicity of their suggested solution for what are to us the inextricable difficulties of our path,—the dear embrace,—the kiss of trusting love which is to heal everything!

For man under the discipline of sorrow our feeling is different. There we look in wonder or in sympathy; we shed kindred tears, we feel the emotions of strong compassion, and the apprehension of having ourselves to suffer personally from the same cause of anxiety; but it is a more elaborate feeling, it is less simple, less intuitive than the one I described above.

Many of the incidents and characters of history bring the same kind of contrast before our notice. There is often a deeper and more stirring impression left by the narratives of some of the early martyrs, whose simple and confiding faith led them forth fearlessly to die, than there is about the more complicated yet perhaps more acute sufferings of men in after days.

A character like Constance in the description of our own dramatist is less moving in one sense than the sorrows of her child Arthur, though more deep, and chastened more severely by the calamities of life. The death of Washington, when at its first recital we see before our mind's eye the passing procession of his great achievements, his simple mode of life, unostentatious abhorrence of selfish aims and motives, is more touching and affecting in a

way than the death of Charles Stuart, however much our hearts may sympathize with his misfortunes, and our generous natures revolt at the barbarity with which he was treated.

3. It seems that we are charmed with a pensive melancholy which is called forth by the study of these characters. We notice in all the instances to which I have referred a union of natural feeling with the quiet and reserved fulfilment of the higher duties of our vocation and public position. And one point we have to keep in mind is this:—There is a peculiar pleasure in finding recorded on pages which describe the past and the men of early or remote periods, the same manifestation of natural feelings of which we are daily and hourly conscious as the motive springs of our most private and domestic actions. The very recognition of this as the indelible handwriting of God upon the surface of the human heart is in itself affecting to us.

The extreme distance of the period of the acts of Tobit and Tobias—the mountains of Armenia—the shores of those rivers which channel the tracts between the inland seas and the Persian gulf; the ground of so many a history belonging to the ancient world—its

gray old age—its ruins, stand up before us as the background to scenes and the passage of figures which are the familiar and daily objects of our private and domestic life. We do as they did then, no more and no less; we bury the dead, we can do nothing less, we wait and weep for absent children and pray for their safe return, we can do no more; we, in old age, sit at the window and gaze on the horizon which bounds our view, longing for the expected figure which will darken it; we can do no more; we fall on the neck of the long absent child and weep, we did it yesterday, we can have no greater delight to-morrow. Their home was our home—their joys our joys, although they belong to the world's childhood, and we to its mature and ripe old age. So it is with Homer. What can be more affecting, than the scenes in which Priam weeps for Hector and Andromache bewails her husband or her boy?

Kings and matrons, warriors and conquerors of the elder world weep and smile like us, expect the long return or press their children to their grateful lips. Man was then what he is now, and "the giants of those days," after all, bring themselves down to men and women like

ourselves. This arrests us, it is unexpected. Drama affects us differently; the agonies of Œdipus—the magnanimity of Antigone—the calamities of Agamemnon—the sublime suffering of Prometheus. Here the man is lost in the hero; the human being in the martyr. They are to the men and women of Homer what Elijah or Solomon might be to Tobit or to Joseph. The drama represents the complicated form of human character; in it the connection between motive and act is laid bare, and we are less affected in the manner which I have been describing.

Thus one account to be given of this effect on our feelings is, *that the discovery of a kindred nature with our own when we least expect it*, ever affects us in like manner; and another is that in these instances there is a simplicity which involves *the taking for granted* that all things are in their right place. The natural feeling is kept in abeyance by the public duty, and the latter toned and softened down by the former. We perhaps feel that such cannot be taken for granted about ourselves, and the effect is more saddening than otherwise.

When we read of vast energies of men exercised to gain ends which have been sought

with an indifference to means, when human passion and feeling have entirely guided the actor without reference to any higher or external principle—we may start, admire, blame, criticise, or what not, but we are not affected in the way spoken of above; and yet it is not that these belong to the more heroic scenes of life while the others do to the more private and domestic, for Abraham was a great conqueror, a bold adventurer over the untraversed steppes of the east, a pioneer to the infant world on the highway of discovery and colonization. He was the archetype of many of the bold and public characters of the world's history: the traveller, the colonist, the conqueror, the feudal lord and founder of infant kingdoms; nevertheless, we are conscious of the same emotion when we read the simple description of the scene in the tent, or the purchase of the field of Machpelah, which we have when we peruse the narrative of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, or of any person who yielded to the most natural calls of personal feeling. Nay, we are more affected by the former than by the latter. It is that very combination which so touches us in Abraham; we feel that there is a consistency, a harmony,

a clearness about the whole character, which may be at variance with our own position. We have lost simplicity ; we have felt the dictates, but disobeyed them, of natural yearnings ; or we have yielded to them, and have sacrificed on their altars our public duty. We gaze on that form—those narratives, as we do on the objects which remind us of some happy childhood—some purer day of boyhood when the motives of life were higher and the vision of the future more open. They are like sweet forms which mock us with their loveliness as they pass away into the realms of shadows. We long to follow them, but they forbid us—we feel their beauty, but we are no longer of them.

Is not this partly the reason of that pensive sadness which the perusal of such characters excites ? since we delight in them and listen to them the more eagerly when we are more pure, more earnest, more real ; we shrink from them when we are less so ; when we are floating from simplicity, but with a sigh.

Again, there is something unaccountably affecting about those actions of life which proceed from motives, which, though we the observers are aware of, nevertheless are reserved and not put forward by the actor.

Joseph's reserve of his strong affection towards his brethren when, nevertheless, it influenced every action towards them is always striking; the going aside to weep, the restored money, the management of the mess, the preference for Benjamin, the mention of the "old man, your father," are in themselves powerful touches of nature; but still more so from the fact of the reserve of the motive-impulse which threw them all out, and becomes to us the background of light against which they stand forth, giving them form, consistency, and relationship. It seems a law of our nature that this reserve should give us these feelings of pleasure. There is a surprise, a power of discovery left to ourselves by which we connect cause and effect which is pleasurable. Though of a higher and more awful character, the same strong feelings are called out by the study of S. John and the Blessed Virgin. Their calm consistency—their deep ponderings—their lofty aspirations astonish and delight us from the very fact that the very power which gave energy to those acts is concealed.

And now apply this state of things to scenes of daily life, and we shall find the same result arising from similar causes.

A child acts rightly on some occasions in which we know it must have suffered acutely in the effort ; the motive is suppressed, and we are affected by the mere fact of the act being before our notice without the agent being conscious of the motive-spring, far more than we ever can be by the act of one who evidently intends to show us the reason of his conduct.

An uneducated man pursues some line of conduct towards us. He shows us attention—personal affection ; the motive of gratitude we do not see—though it impels him, we guess at it, or we hear of it afterwards, and we are touched with a power with which no amount of a more unreserved attention could have affected us. Or with those we love most dearly in life ; they go through acts of self-sacrifice and denial for our sake—they deny themselves comforts to help us—they watch by the bedside of feverish delirium or uneasy sleep ; they provide blessings and aids for us when we do not know either the mind which devised them or the hand which gave them, and when we do discover all this we stand astonished and feel affected in a way in which we should not have been if we had all along known the motive of the conduct.

But in characters and scenes such as we find in Tobit, there is a *combination of the official dignity with the natural affections and impulses* which is among the most striking features. Why this should affect us so sensibly—why it should evoke emotion of a pensive kind is perhaps difficult to determine, but I cannot help tracing the whole to that principle of reserved motive, which creates paradox—to an unexpected result in the scenes and occasions of life.

We are so used to thinking men insensible to deep feelings, the whole fabric of society so based on unreality, and men in the world so suspicious of high motives and causes of action, that when we do find that expectation reversed we are startled, and somewhat saddened. There is a contrast between some particular case and the mass of cases which come before our notice, perhaps with our own, and we are pained.

Practically these instances teach us to be *real*; to learn the perfect consistency between natural emotions and the great vocation of life, and to dread going on in the suppression of the former under the vain impression that God may give us feelings which are inconsistent with the talents He has bid us improve.

If the beauty of these characters and acts delight us, we at least see before us what condition of man and action is possible and is admirable.

He who strives to live above man's affections and impulses is below man's true position, and by attempting to ignore the manifest will of God in the design of creation and society he is acting the part of the moral coward if he is not of the sceptic. It is in the control and subordination of the whole that true beauty consists, not in the annihilation of any part. We live in an age of drama. Motives are exposed by the keen knife of analysis and dissection, and we lose much of that which is so lovely in the retrospect of the past by unveiling the hidden springs of motive and feeling. There are animals of whom naturalists tell us, which destroy their nurtured young when it has been disturbed or gazed at. When bared to the vulgar eye our holiest feelings take themselves wings and flee away.



LXXV.

BEZALEEL AND AHOLIAB.

ART THE HANDMAID OF RELIGION.

EXODUS XXXVI. 1.

"THEN WROUGHT BEZALEEL AND AHOLIAB, AND EVERY WISE HEARTED MAN, IN WHOM THE LORD PUT WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING TO KNOW HOW TO WORK ALL MANNER OF WORK FOR THE SERVICE OF THE SANCTUARY, ACCORDING TO ALL THAT THE LORD HAD COMMANDED."

1. THE distinct statement "that God filled with wisdom of heart Aholiab" to work all manner of work of the engraver and cunning workman; and that "Bezaleel and Aholiab" were men into whose heart the Lord put wisdom and understanding "to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary," is sufficient to trace the possession of those gifts and talents which arrange what is beautiful in form and colour to a divine origin. As much

as Solomon's wisdom, which enabled him to be deep and accurate in the knowledge of practical science, was the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit ; so was the taste which governed Bezaleel and Aholiab the direct gift of God.

Now my work, of course, does not lie with the characters of these two good men of which we know little enough, so much as with the idea which this mention of them suggests.

That idea is large, and pregnant with deep import.

The works of art may be the fruits of the Spirit. Then a beautiful taste may be the gift of the Holy One ; and painting, sculpture, and music become direct and almost necessary instruments of Christianity.

2. The history of the past alone would show us how important this subject is ; religion has as a fact been aided and advanced through the instrumentality of art ; through it her doctrines have been impressed on the minds of men and her peculiar practices rendered clear and intelligible. If the power which has achieved this be only and merely human—if it be simply one which is derivable from a corrupt and unregenerate nature without consecration by the gift of grace, then it may become a weapon

most formidable in the hands of error ; but if that power be capable of consecration, by the neglect of it we may be casting aside a weapon of incalculable temper and aptitude for achieving the ends of truth.

This is apparent enough. But the reasons of this influence I will refer to hereafter.

The history of God's people shows the influence of art and science over the minds of those whom God was forming for Himself, and over the infant condition of the Church which He was gathering from the early races of mankind. This alone would be enough to show that He intended to make use of these powers in affecting the souls of men. The fervour of imagination, the flash of fancy, purity of taste, are as surely means of feeding and supporting the spiritual nature as the keenness of the intellect, the width of the intelligence, the soundness of the reason, or the warmth of the feelings.

In earliest days Jubal and Jabal were renowned, and their renown is recorded on the page of sacred history as the fathers of architecture and music ; among the forms of those dim old shadowy giants of the earlier world stand out alike the pious faith of Abel and the

consistent walk of Enoch, the vast longevity of Methuselah, with Jabal, father "of such as dwell in tents and have cattle," and Jubal, father "of all such as handle the harp and organ." But the flood swept its desolating waves across the world, and with it bore away the traces of art and scientific arrangement.

The progenitors of the postdiluvian world left the ark with the germs of the same powers, and the children of Shem became clever in adaptation of colour and observers of the heavenly bodies, while those of Japhet studied the beauty of form and the relative forces of matter.

If we have no mention of some arts which are famous among us to-day, at least the polished gem glittered and flashed upon the camel's neck of Zeba and Zalmunna; and the artificers of Lebanon were needed to erect a temple to the living God. The lions and the sea, the knops and the pomegranates, were carved from the cedar or the stone at the bidding of the designer and by the will of the Owner. The trace of art as the system of the arrangement of God's works in such manner as may delight the eye or elevate the soul by what is beautiful in form or colour may be continually found throughout the sacred narratives; and more than that, the

evident recognition of the work of art being also a religious work, and the energies of those who pursue it being directed and conducted by the HOLY SPIRIT, stands out still more prominently. It is with this as a principle that I have to do.

The history of Christianity is the history of art; painting, music, poetry, and architecture, owe their noblest illustrations and their deepest intentions to the spirit and genius of Christianity. Whatever may have been the first rude effort of painting traceable to the earlier periods of heathen antiquity, or however true or false, the fable of the first effort at delineation by colour discovered within the walls of Troy, it would take but little time to show that the course of *historic painting* has been the history of Christianity. Italy, Spain, and Holland assert their pre-eminence in this line over the world, and nearly every name connected with the history of art has been at the same time synonymous with the development of Christianity too.

If we pass in review the names illustrious for painting, we naturally pause on Francia and Ghirlandaio; Michael Angelo and Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci and Correggio; or our eye wanders to northern climes and we rest on

Rubens, Vandyck, and Quintin Matsys, Mabuse, and his school, and (not because forgotten, but because pre-èminent,) the name of Fra Angelico stands alone ; these are the heroes and kings of the empire of art.

3. But what was the subject of their art ? what the power which really gave energy and force to their sense of the beautiful in form, colour, conception, and arrangement ? what but the incidents of the Gospel and the doctrines of Christianity ? The Nativity of JESUS has been the cradle and cratch in which the "Child" of art has been raised ; and His blessed Mother pourtrayed on the canvas has become to the eye of men the form among women ; the "Nativity" or "Holy Family" of Raphael has become the heirloom alike of art and of the Church. The matchless Form when it had shed its last precious drop for our sake will ever call to mind our own pictures of Francia, and the terrors of the last judgment awaken through grace the sinner to repentance, and the saint to hope, through the conceptions of Michael Angelo or Fra Angelico. Correggio has attempted that priceless crown in which no earthly jewel shone ; and the "Last Supper" will probably assert through future ages the

prominence of Leonardo da Vinci. Murillo's S. John Baptist, a child in the wilderness, will attract the few who are not more powerfully arrested by his "prodigal son." The resurrection of the just, radiant in their "passionless renown," has been conceived by, and left the masterpiece of Fra Angelico; and the "Crucified One," washed out by his tears has been the only reason that the same artist has not left the world its own masterpiece of the Crucifixion.

Sacred subjects are as much the index and catalogue of art as are the names of painters. The stories of Judith and Tobit, the histories of Abraham and David, the raising of Lazarus or the widow's son, the figures which in the ministry of Jesus grouped around His blessed Person, Mary Magdalene, S. Peter and S. John, the tales of martyrdom and confessorship, Sebastian among the arrows, and S. Stephen among the stones, have each and all become as identified with the history of art as the names of Zuccharelli or Piombo, Guido or Guercino. In fact, if the infidel were bid to decide on the claims of Christianity as a mere historical fact, absorbing into itself the concentrated attention of successive generations with which the his-

tories of Greece, Rome, and Germany could offer no successful rivalry or competition, he must decide that viewed historically alone Christianity had a claim which was irresistible.

The paintings of the world have been the lineaments of the Gospel, and the galleries of Europe are the museums of Christian antiquity.

But what is true of painting is so also of architecture. Nearly every name illustrious in that department is embalmed in some splendid temple raised to the glory of Jesus.

4. Not only, however, are we struck with the historic position of art in its relation to religion, but we are arrested with the fact that it is mixed up with the expression of religion through the Catholic and visible Church; with her growth it grew, with her wide-spread and developing power it became intensified, and with her decline and the loosening of the hold of her hands on the intelligent communities of Europe, her beauty paled, her genius faded, and her energy became paralyzed. Where the Church became feeble in her hold on the sympathies and energies of men art deteriorated and became degenerate. Church architecture was renowned for her less sublime forms in the ages of the Tudors, and in the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries became content with the low and depressed standard of the Renaissance and other kindred schools.

With the relaxation of the study of the Incarnate Form a power was taken from the "designs of groups," and the conception of the sublime in form; and the indifference felt for historic Christianity was quickly expressed and known in the absence from the canvass of those scenes and circumstances which had once been the favourite objects of the painter and the master.

5. A visible and tangible system seems essential to the creative power of art. Mere natural religion had no such power. It needed the formal and the recognition of the formal as an essential attribute in religion to give this energy to the artist. The whole system of Catholicity is formal, and involves the external and visible life in greater or less degree replete with inward and spiritual grace. The Catholic system as opposed to other schools of theology is one which supports its disciple by every conceivable arrangement of fact and figure.

Though the first article of her creed points to the one invisible and triune God, the Church does not leave her child there. That one God is

further expressed to the mind by the localities of Jerusalem and Capernaum, Bethany and Nazareth, and the figures which group around the manger and the Cross. Mary and John, Joseph and Peter become so many outlines which, by expressing the Nativity and the Crucifixion, express sacramentally also the nature and attributes of God. The creed also recognizes the Catholic Church. But it is no mere mystical idea, a body of floating opinions or formed of indefinite principles and persons. Her saints are definite and individual. Time has not destroyed their identity nor blent their outline of figures into the haze of mere ideality. The Catholic Church is shown forth by twelve Apostles who did live and live to-day, who were in Jerusalem that then was, and are in "Jerusalem which now is," the ancestral halls of the Church are hung and surrounded by definite trophies of victory and courage, the arrows of Sebastian, the lions of Ignatius, and the gridiron of Laurence.

6. But it is not my object now to dwell on these circumstances for their own sake. My aim is to apply them as acknowledged facts to another matter in hand: the opportunities afforded to art by such a system. Man yearns after the visible, though strong to live the life

of faith he clings to the tangible form when he may lawfully have it, and the tales of the Incarnation and the Acts of the Church become opportunities of realizing that power of sight in a lawful and powerful manner. The painter saw his opportunities; those were the figures, the groups, the scenery, the lights, and shadows of the eastern world. More than this; what he painted was true, nay, was inspired. In proportion as the soul yearned after heavenly things, in that proportion man flew to these subjects. The painter found a market as well as a subject; the Church received and consecrated his efforts; he needed no more. The tales of history; the heroism of Coriolanus; the tragedy of the Curatii; the dreamy splendour of Xerxes, are but fables by the side of the narratives of Holy Writ.

It might be appropriate by the way to suggest the argument which this very fact may give for the truth of Catholicity itself. The powers of art in form, colour, expression, and arrangement, whether through the marble or the canvass, are gifts of God to our original nature. They are as much signs of the great Creator's Hand as any other portion of our moral and mental fabric. If then they find

their opportunity so readily in a great external expression of religion, is it not one of the signs that that system is itself from God? Is it not a sign that those forms to which the inherent powers of art so readily adapt themselves, and that in such way as they do to no other, are the external and visible signs of that inward religion which He has proclaimed true?

It is deep answering to deep—the far interior voices of one portion of our being responding to the other—the past echoing to the present—the powers of intellect and taste at once recognizing in the Church a natural relationship, a fraternity, a correlation. The similarity of every one of the accidents attending our state with those which mark external physical nature, and the extraordinary resemblance and analogy between the order of the society of man and the arrangement of the other parts of the universe have been in themselves considered evidences and proof of the unity of the two as parts of one system and resulting from one master hand. The one gives a stamp to the other; and the inferior by its very indirect witness sets the seal of truth on the superior; so the powers and energies of taste by at once suiting themselves to the Church system pro-

claim its truth and declare themselves to be of God. The practical results to this view are endless; I will suggest a few of them:—

a. If this be so, how important it is that when art is employed on sacred subjects it should approach them reverently and prayerfully. How little fitting is the mode so common among us of treating sacred subjects quite indifferently and placing them side by side as mere works of art, with the profane illustrations of heathenism and the grossest forms of sensuality. An artist sits down to paint a subject, and it is a matter of indifference whether it shall be Venus or the Virgin, the Last Day or a scene from the Decameron of Boccaccio. At least we have something to learn from the religious reverence of days gone by which led men to choose the subjects for their own intrinsic merit or beauty, and not simply to take them promiscuously from profane or sacred history, from the imagery of heaven or hell, merely as studies for the pencil and accidental opportunities of exercising art. We want to see art recognize her parent, and respect for her own sake the mother from which she sprung. We want to see men select the Holy Family, because it may tend to create know-

ledge of Christian facts in the minds of the ignorant or awaken reverential feelings in the minds of the religious; to describe the Passion, that the expression of it may awaken thoughts of comfort to the dying, or may leave deeply impressed on the memory the great fact of His precious death. We remember with a sigh the tales, so little true of us to-day, which speak of Fra Angelico erasing with his tears the Figure which he had in vain attempted to describe on the cross. Here surely art is recognising its due relationship, and might again become the cause of that energy and those emotions which gave her birth. But we may sigh for it in vain. The studio of the painter no longer is synonymous with the cloister or the home of Catholic practices and devotions. The impression to be made on our higher nature no longer is the first thought of the student. The idea of the painting being an offering to God for the beauty of His Church and His own glory has passed away. We know it no more. Men no longer emulate the gift of the alabaster box, and the yearning to be remembered in after days as the man who strove to consecrate powers and gifts to the glory of Jesus.

How beautiful if still it existed! And des-

pite our knowledge of the altered state of feeling, we stand sometimes surprised that some such thoughts do not enter the minds of men. It would be a heart-inspiring thought to feel that by the mode in which we were treating the figure of our Divine SAVIOUR bearing His Cross, we should be able to cheer and comfort some sinking spirit in the hour of death, or enable some who felt the Cross was laid also on themselves to feel how merciful He was Who "bore their griefs," by the expression of the Eye or the sorrow of the countenance! How heart-inspiring to represent the matchless Form so as to bring home to each penitent the eye of Him "Who turned and looked on Peter," or the sympathizing accents of that voice which said to the widow "Weep not." It would be no difficult thing to imagine that a man who was master of his art and inspired by a love to God and his fellow creatures, should feel that in such an application of it he was acting the part of a priest and of one whose mission was far higher than the mere vocation of giving pleasure or amusement.

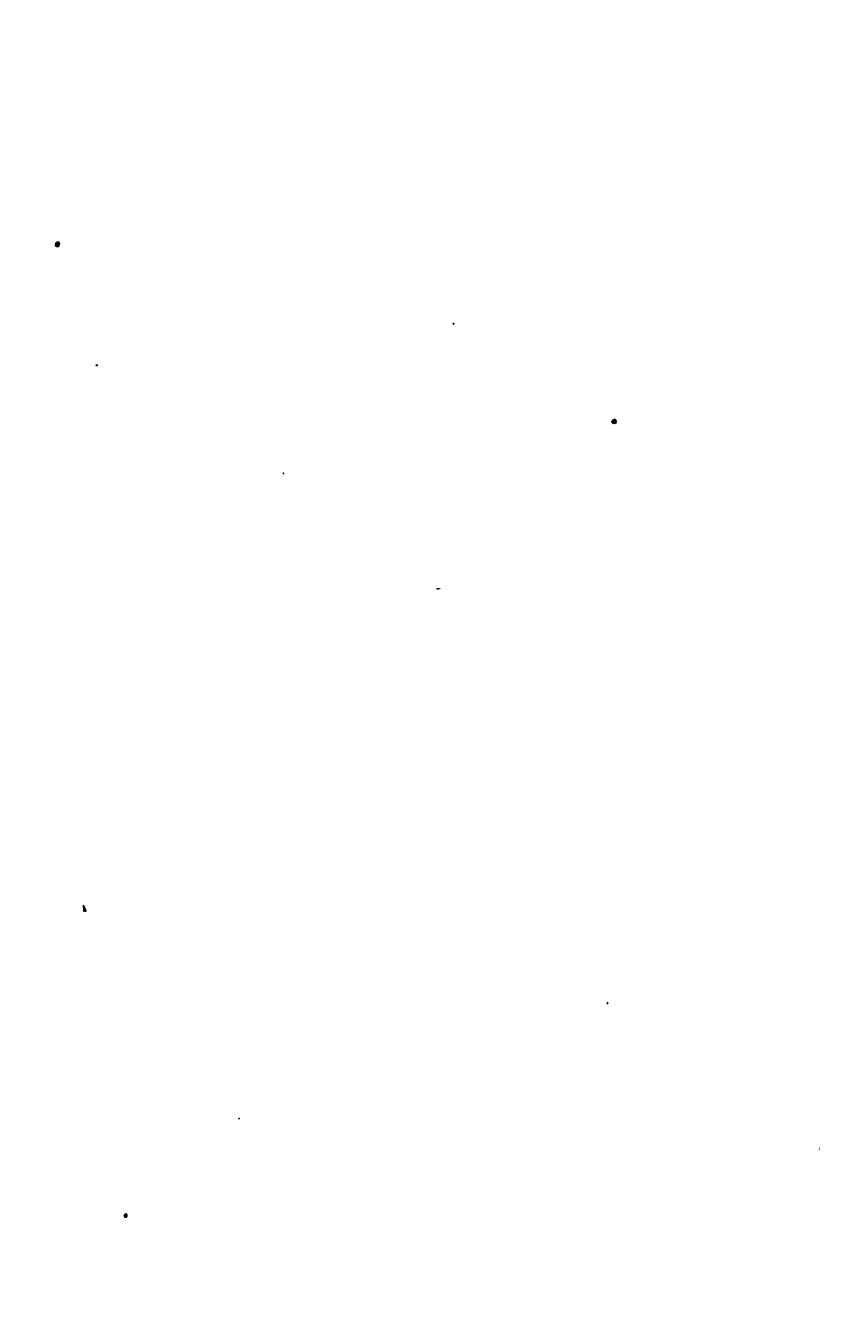
b. Another thought seems suggested by this consideration:—If art be intended to express so high a class of objects how careful we should

be in their arrangements so as to conduce to this high end! The subject-matter of painting should not be so treated as to convey the impression that the artistic or technical beauty alone is to be the object of the arrangement, but so that the intended impression should be best made upon the mind. We cannot be reckless of the effect of the sensual suggestion made by a profane representation, or of the inappropriateness of placing the figure of the Preacher of repentance by the side of the daughter of a Bacchanalian revel, each form of which is suggestive of evil and temptation to an impure and tempted nature. It would not be difficult for any one to see that this would violate the high intention of art, and make the Bezaleels and Aholiabs of each day priests of Beelzebub instead of architects of the tabernacle.

We sometimes see the walls of rooms hung with such representations as shock the least sensitive and delicate mind, and yet within and under the influence of those walls are growing up children and youths whose eyes dwell upon and memories brood over those forms to a degree we cannot estimate. Such subjects pander to the craving of our sinful nature and become

the key which opens the door of the heart letting out the ghastly troops of lusts and impurities. True; we do not know or notice at the time the harm which is doing or the treasurings of evil storing up in these garnerers, because no mind is so reserved as that of youth, and so little inclined to betray the inmost emotions of the soul. The best thing for us to do is to look back to the days of our own childhood and see what the impression was then made upon our own minds by similar objects, and we shall then be able to appreciate better the risk we run for others.

No. If in heaven all that has been lovely here will be again the object of our delight, only purified, sanctified, and made immortal, at least let us allow those fleeting beauties which are the foreshadowing and anticipations of that great future,—to guide us to it and prepare us for it, and not to become direct hindrances to our reaching our great reward. The earth and all in it is a Sacrament. The last thing a Christian should do, should be to make its external form the outward sign of evil instead of good.



LXXVI.

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

JESUS SEEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

CANTICLES I. 1.

“THE SONG OF SONGS, WHICH IS SOLOMON’S.”

1. IN dwelling on the characters of the Old Testament it is natural to consider the Song of Songs; not that it bears very immediately on the mind of its writer when considered with regard to his peculiar turn and disposition, but that the principle which underlies it underlies so much of the Old Testament Scripture, and is the true key to so many of its thoughts and expressions—the anticipation of the personal love of JESUS and the devotion of His Church to Him: I do not mean that the several writers were directly conscious of that vast power of af-

fection which they were suggesting; or had seen, except in the faintest vision of the future, the matchless Form they describe. They saw Him, though not nigh; they beheld Him, but not then; they perceived the dim outline of a figure advancing from the mist, and as it took clearer and keener shape they described it with closer and keener accuracy.

In fact without this view of the Old Testament it loses four-fifths of its power to a Christian student. It may express in exquisite simplicity the tales of the elder world; it may be a record of the state of religious belief or knowledge in the earliest ages: it may be to us the roll-call of those who loved God through knowledge and means far inferior to our own, and stand out as the picture gallery of the people of God from the beginning of the world: nevertheless all this falls far short of the object we have in view as Christians. We want to discover in it the expectation of CHRIST, the shadow He cast before Him in His Advent. We want to see the yearning which mankind felt for His approach—the vacuum which only He could fill. We want to understand Him better by scanning those features which are given in outline through typical tale and pro-

phetic description. We would hear the united cry of the elder world condensed in the sentence, "We would see JESUS."

JESUS CHRIST is our aim. We have no other; nor do we look for Him as the embodiment of a doctrine, but as a distinct and present Person; and the acts of His life as facts, not ideas.

With this view the Psalms are to us so important and blessed a manual; without this view they are comparatively powerless—beautiful—heavenly still; but beautiful only as a bird is without the ascending power of its wings, when read or used apart from the clearer recognition of their allegorical and typical meaning.

It is with this view that the Church in all ages has given so great a prominence to the Psalms in her acts of worship and embodied them in every service; without this view we should find it difficult to justify or understand the large use of them in our own English forms.

To no portion of the Old Testament are these principles so referable as to the Song of Solomon. If we see in it JESUS CHRIST and the Church, it becomes the most powerful ex-

pression of their reciprocal love and devotion to each other which the world contains ; if we do not see Him in it, it becomes less than pointless as a study. It embodies the whole question of the typical nature of the Old Testament writings. With this stamp placed upon it by the Church in every age, it is indeed startling to hear men calmly propose its expulsion from the Canon of Scripture. An expulsion, which if it took place, would cast grave doubts on the position and claims of the body which authorized it.

2. Before I approach any analysis of the Song of Solomon it is well to consider the claims with which it comes before us.

Though written very possibly by Solomon with reference to the daughter of Pharaoh, it seems evidently to have had a deep symbolical meaning from the beginning. All things in Scripture are for CHRIST's sake from the beginning of the world. In one sense Isaac bore his wood for the sacrifice, because CHRIST has to carry the Cross ; and Joseph was sold by his brethren, because He was to be sold by His. David ascended Mount Olivet weeping to foreshadow the tears which JESUS shed over the guilty and apostate city ; and the Jews re-

turned from their Babylonish captivity because they were hereafter to have a greater return from a greater captivity. The Church of the wilderness and the first temple were the pictures of the Church of the Gospel; and the forms which floating by cast their shadows on the elder world were shades of that greater Figure which was to absorb the attention of mankind and of the Church for ever and ever. Such is the power which underlies the Song of Songs.

Guided by a Voice they felt but did not hear, and a Form they perceived but could not see, holy men of old, through the song, the history, and the rhapsody, uttered the hidden meanings of external forms. To their eye God manifested Himself to them through the visible creation in a way He did not to the world, and which the world did not understand. To them the visible earth and the histories of mankind were a great sacrament; everything had a deeper meaning than could come out to the ordinary eye. There was a continual reflexion on the upper waves and still waters of life which presented itself to the eye of the observer; but deeper and deeper down continually was the pavement of jewels

on which the foot was finally to rest ; and that pavement was the Incarnation. That underlies the history of man. All short of that is but the shifting reflection of water—the evanescence of an impalpable shadow. We creep amid allegories. In heaven, and there alone, we shall dwell among substances.

The Church ever realized this of old. What men of to-day call the fanciful interpretations and far-fetched meanings of her writers are really the results of that deep view which she took of all things as hiding CHRIST, but to reveal Him to the earnest eye and watchful heart. All things were what they were because JESUS was so. All things lovely—all things true—all things honourable received their character from Him. Abraham's fidelity, Jacob's affection, Joseph's forgiveness, Moses' leadership of the chosen people, the sweet loveliness of David's harp, Solomon's wisdom, and Job's patience, all were what they were because of Him Who said, "Before Abraham was I am." They were but repeated reflections of portions of His Incarnation for which the world was waiting expectant.

So it is that the Church has ever in her days of earnestness and special devotion used the

Song of Solomon. It has been the thermometer of her condition ; when and where her energy and love were strong, then and there the Song of Songs became the mode and form of her expression. S. Bernard's commentary bears witness to this : the love that the monks of Citeaux in their day of fresh and quickened energy bore to it is a strong proof of the estimation in which it was then held. And what is true of Bernard and Citeaux in the eleventh and twelfth centuries has been true of the Church in every age. Even in this age we are not without our witness to the same truth. There are passages which men among us are in the habit of quoting frequently which show how naturally love for Jesus and religion flow into the stream of that song, though men may not remember always the part of Scripture from which they borrow expressions almost proverbial.

JESUS is often spoken of as "the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely ;" as "the rose of Sharon and lily of the valley ;" the conviction is often expressed that "His banner over us is love ;" the longing is uttered that the "day may break and the shadows flee away." How many of us have known and quoted the words scarce thinking whence they came ? "O

my dove, thou art in the clefts of the rocks, in the secret places of the stairs." No : few words have ever even in our own cold age more often syllabled the intense feelings of love to JESUS than those of the Song of Solomon. It has been counted suitable by the consent of the Church of other days, and it is now reckoned so by the usage of the holy who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" in these.

This deeper and allegorical view is clearly the one which the Church among us intends us to take, as we find in the brief headings to chapters and pages a continual reference of the words to "CHRIST and the Church." CHRIST glorying "in the Church." "CHRIST's love to His Church."

3. There would, however, naturally be different ways of viewing and systematizing "the Song" to aid our memory and our devotions.

One simple division would be between the character the Church gives herself in her approach to JESUS and the love He professes to that Church in His approach to her.

The Church describes herself in terms such as these : she is "black but comely ;" "the sun has looked upon me—my mother's children are angry with me—the keeper of a vineyard—but

my own vineyard not kept." She then expresses her yearning for CHRIST. This longing for Him is described in the conclusion of the second chapter under the image of the "dove"—"the secret places of the stairs"—"the lilies and the break of day," in all of which the Church seeks to find CHRIST.

Then she pourtrays herself in conflict; the opening of the description being her confession of sin and infirmity. She seeks Him by night, in stillness she rises and goes after Him, she finds Him in the dark and holds Him. She then bursts forth into praise and adoration. He is to her the pillar of smoke, myrrh, and frankincense. He is a king crowned like Solomon, and the day of her espousals is that of gladness of heart.

A change has taken place in the interlocution and CHRIST declares the beauties of His Church. Her stature is described in chapter iv., her looks, her hair, her teeth, her lips and speech, her temples and neck, her breasts. "Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee." But the Church still needs rousing. Her "soul cleaveth to the dust," and He calls her to awake; the Church hearing His call at once rouses herself and is inflamed with love

for Him, follows asking for Him and describing His exceeding beauty. This includes the fifth chapter.

The remainder is made up of an alternation of expressions of love and admiration between CHRIST and the Church. The conclusion, after manifesting the deep affection of the Church, especially refers to the call of the Gentiles, and then sets the seal to all her yearning by expressing a longing for the coming of CHRIST. "Make haste, my Beloved, and be Thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices."

4. There are so many points of view in which it is possible and natural to study this page of Holy Scripture, that it is hard to fix on one. It might be, however, well to consider it under the heads of its peculiar suitability to form a manual of devotions for those who, as penitents or saints, are seeking after JESUS; and as I said, the holy and earnest-minded of every school and age have already set their seal to its fitness for this object, from the proverbial form which they have given to its phrases and expressions in the vocabulary of the Church.

And first, its images are the images na-

tural to the earnest-minded. It is impossible for the mind and soul adequately to express ideas by words. No known form of language or utterance is co-extensive with their living energies and desires. In beating about for expression those forms which come as the accustomed ones expressive of beauty, force, and truth, become the most eloquent utterance of the deeper and spiritual nature. We know this from poetry—from philosophy—from the ordinary language of Holy Scripture.

“Like as the hart desireth the water brooks” is the most intense expression on record of the longing of the soul after God. “Blessed is he that hungereth and thirsteth after righteousness,” stands prominent among the first delineations of the Gospel character. “Let him that is athirst come,” are words which, with acknowledged beauty, express the love of Jesus for them who long for Him; and the jewels of earth and the flowers which deck its surface are largely mentioned as allegorical of the glories of the New Jerusalem. Every tongue falls easily into the language, and every mind appreciates it quickly. The most uneducated at once adopt it; and those who are conscious of no poetry of feeling or language find no difficulty

in displaying the real poetry inherent in their nature by the pictures they borrow from nature. So the parables are the natural language of the poor, and the stories of "the shepherd" and "the sower" the most suitable to the mind of childhood.

The Song of Songs is full of this style of expression.

Take for instance the description of JESUS in the opening of chapter ii.:—"I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters. As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." This is the language suited to the utterance of those who love Him, and the imagery of nature makes it appropriate. Or the concluding portion of the same chapter:—"My Beloved spake and said unto me, Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the

tender grape give a good smell. Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away. O My dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. . . . My Beloved is mine, and I am His : He feedeth among the lilies. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be Thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.” Here is language which, borrowed from the works of nature, at once comes home to every heart and is within the apprehension of all minds educated or not, and it is the language of intense desire, joy, and peace in believing. How luxuriant too and overflowing are the words in the end of chapter iv. describing “the garden” of the Church :—“ How fair is thy love, My sister, My spouse ! how much better is thy love than wine ! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices ! Thy lips, O My spouse, drop as the honeycomb : honey and milk are under thy tongue ; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. A garden inclosed is My sister, My spouse ; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates,

with pleasant fruits ; camphire, with spikenard ; spikenard and saffron ; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense ; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices : a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. Awake, O north wind ; and come, thou south ; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits."

All these passages show how naturally adapted to the heart of the religious the language of "the Song" is.

5. But the expressions of penitence, humility, and self-condemnation make it beautifully fitted to the life of those who "mourn after a godly sort" and to become a manual of expression for the returning sinner.

"Look not upon me because I am black," says the spouse, "a bundle of myrrh is my wellbeloved: He shall lie all night between my breasts." Myrrh is the emblem of suffering, and the desire of the bride that He Whom she loves may continually lie in the inmost heart expresses that dread of infirmity, and tendency to evil, which is the root and ground of humility and penitential sorrow. The character given by CHRIST of His

Church is of the same nature ; as “ a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.” When the wind sways the thorns they pierce the lily on every side, and the bleeding flower sends out the odour to embalm the piercing thorn, so that the sorrows of the chastened Church become the means of her most intense delight and peace. What more beautiful image could there be of the conscious humility and penitential mind of the people of JESUS who yearn for union with Him.

So, too, in the fifth chapter we have the description of the attitude and life of the penitent ; so much so, that there is scarcely one who would not intuitively call up the figure of Mary Magdalene to represent the character there described.

6. But the yearnings of love are among the most striking parts of the song. The language is that of the deepest affection ; and no expressions seem so natural a channel through which the stream of love may flow as those which we find here. Love is expressed in many separate parts. In proportion to its intensity it will have but a single object—it will exclude and be jealous of all others—it will be self-denying and self-sacrific-

ing—it will be intense in its yearnings and desires—it will be permanent.

This singleness of love is shown by many of those descriptions which bring the Church out as seeking the object of her affection through restless search and constant inquiry. “Draw me, we will run after Thee.” “O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.” So, too, the whole opening of the third chapter—“By night on my bed I sought Him Whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye Him Whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him Whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake

my love, till He please." So, again, in chapter v.—"I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? My beloved put in His hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels moved for Him. I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone: my soul failed when He spake: I sought Him, but I could not find Him; I called Him, but He gave me no answer. The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell Him, that I am sick of love."

In all these passages we have the Church or our Blessed Lord seeking each other to the exclusion of every other object, devoted to the one aim, passing all others by and asking of

every one where the object of that search has gone. There is an intensity and singleness of search in this which is without parallel.

This spirit will ever mark the desire of the soul which is seeking JESUS. No other object will be an obstacle—no human affection—no interests—no worldly position—no honour among men—no shame—no fear of death—nor love of life. Every passing circumstance and object will be an opportunity of asking for Him.

The intensity of these words shows how fitting the Song is to be the manual of prayer and aspiration for the servants of God. Where is the saint who will not at once feel their power and suitability to the yearnings of the spiritual mind? The passage in chapter viii., is one which no human utterance ever transcended—"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

7. But not only is the song expressive of

the love of JESUS and the Church, it also becomes typical of the acts of our LORD's life. His Passion and Resurrection are unmistakably shadowed forth in it; so much so, that the natural illustration of "the Song" would be the scenes of the Gospel.

The Person of CHRIST, His separate parts, His Incarnation embodying our attributes and entire humanity, are set forth here in all the acts and expressions of the Spouse to the Church. He appears as a distinct and definite Person, not merely the accidental representation of our ideas. He speaks with a voice of a man. He loves with human affection. He bears and suffers long with the power which only one who knows our frame could do. He dwells in the palace to which He leads His Bride and feasts in the bantered hall which He has made beautiful for her reception. In no other part of the Old Testament is the actual form and person of JESUS Incarnate so clearly and separately brought out. He is shown in type and picture. He is described in His attributes in the prophets. Isaiah sings of His Birth and His Death—His Incarnation and Resurrection. But it is as of one who is to come, not as one who is already taking part in the scenes of life with others

that surround Him ; this consequently gives a *reality* and life to the Song of Solomon which other portions of the Old Testament have not in the same proportion.

Then how unmistakeably typical are the scenes in the garden of the Resurrection and the meetings with His seeking and mourning Church ! These parts of the ministry of our Blessed LORD are most naturally those which "the Song" would celebrate, as they represent the re-union of CHRIST with His Church. Mary Magdalene seeking her LORD and asking the gardener to point her to where He is, is set forth in the scene of the Church seeking her LORD in the night and finding Him. His approach to her surrounded by the images of His saints, "who rose;" and the repose of the grave broken by the splendid description of the advent of the risen King crowned "for His espoused," is typified in the third chapter.—"By night on my bed I sought Him Whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom

I said, Saw ye Him Whom my soul loveth ? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him Whom my soul loveth : I held Him, and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till He please. Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant ? Behold His bed, which is Solomon's ; three-score valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war : every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night. King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart."

The call of the Gentiles after the Resurrec-

tion is adverted to in the description of "the little Sister," mentioned after the passage about "love" being like a "seal" in the eighth chapter :—"We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts : what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for ? If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver : and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar."

Whether as typical of the spiritual re-union between CHRIST and His Church, or of the Incarnation and acts of His Nativity and Life on earth, "the Song" is one of the most luminous jewels which gleam in the crown of inspiration ; and that day would be a dark one and boding ill indeed of the love and energy of His Church, which should see those matchless words depreciated or cast aside.

LXXVII.

ELIHU.

CREDULOUS AND INCREDULOUS MINDS.

JOB XXXII. 2.

“THEN WAS KINDLED THE WRATH OF ELIHU THE SON OF BARACHEL THE BUZITE, OF THE KINDRED OF RAM : AGAINST JOB WAS HIS WRATH KINDLED, BECAUSE HE JUSTIFIED HIMSELF RATHER THAN GOD.”

1. THE character of Elihu, influencing as it does his speech and address, tends to throw light on the difficulty, which every one must feel, more or less, in the relative positions occupied by Job and his three friends. “Who are right and who are wrong?” is a natural question asked by many readers ; “wherein are they right and wherein are they wrong?”

We all know the stamp which has been affixed to Job’s character by the Word of God. We regard him as a shock gathered

with the sheaf and safely treasured amid His own beloved ones. Nevertheless, his words occasionally savour of hastiness, impatience, and petulance. His friends condemn him, and Elihu finds fault with both. We feel the force of the objections raised by his friends, and we are half startled by the announcement at the end of God's anger against those friends. It is impossible but that any student of Holy Scripture should wish to penetrate the mystery, and ascertain what the standard of right and wrong is, by which their several words and actions are judged and determined.

Elihu's position is to a certain degree a key to the question. His character is natural and like that of many among us ; but to ascertain it we must examine his words.

He appears to have been a young man of keen perception, vigorous intellect, and possessed of the idea that he had a mission to teach and criticise others. He saw their mistakes as a bystander might, and set himself to correct them. In the thirty-second chapter he justifies his proceedings. He declares his youth and natural unfitness to teach those older than himself. He then describes himself as "bursting" with strong feeling and pregnant matter

on the question in hand and therefore impelled to speak. But the thing which peculiarly stirs him is, that while Job was clearly wrong, the friends had not hit off the truth, they had erred more than he, and this he considers as over-ruled for good that they might not fancy that "they had answered him," and that they, and not God had "thrust him down." With this view of their relative positions he goes to work to answer their objections and to correct Job.

The opening of his speech to Job gives the impression of a simple and intentionally humble person, nevertheless deeply persuaded that his mission to advise and teach others is from God. In these respects, his force of character, youth, keenness of intellect, mingled with humility, remind us of Daniel or S. Stephen. Yet there is an inclination to condemn others, and to an apparent arrogance which makes us for a moment pause ere we place him with such men as those to whom I have referred. But the best way of ascertaining his character is to see what the substance of his speech is.

He first describes himself "as full of matter." Now this at once brings before us the history of many a youth who full of earnest feeling, is so convinced of his opinion that there is no

power of restraining either the expression of it or the conviction of its possession. This looks like vanity—but it need not be.

There is an intuitive consciousness of inspiration in the minds of some men, and those often are the young, which seems to point them out as men to do a work for God or the advancement of souls in their own day. The power which urges them within is one they cannot resist. It is the teaching and influence of God. It may be some strong and righteous indignation at the oppression exercised by the powerful and the rich, some earnest record against tyranny and unfair dealing. It may be some swelling emotion kindled by vice, scepticism or profligacy which stalk forth unchecked by law or uncontrolled by popular indignation. It may be some keen and masterly perception of the beautiful in taste or the perfect in art which men around have lost sight of through vitiation of tone or the dereliction of old models of beauty and truth. It may be the swelling tide of genius, invention, or originality, rolling onwards in poetic expression—fictitious narrative or humorous description—never mind what; many a youth is conscious of some such energy, and being conscious of it can neither resist the

consciousness nor hinder the expression of the power. Society usually condemns such men, though men often have to endorse their work in after days.

Such a one Elihu seems. It was not the possession of the power to see truth unseen by others which was his fault ; nor was it the consciousness that he possessed it ; but the presuming on the power, to offend against the laws of humility and modesty, and the thrusting forward the consciousness of his ability in such a way as to contemn and despise others, or to give to others the impression that they are despised and neglected.

Joseph possessed powers and energies which gave him promise of a great future, and before which he knew that the craftiness of Dan or the sensuality of Judah must necessarily fall. He was aware that he was the chosen of God and the favourite of his father. He could not help this, it was true. He felt it—he knew it. He was inspired by God with the conviction. He dreamed his dream, and he told the interpretation ; but we cannot doubt that he was somewhere to blame. If so, it was in too boastful a manner of address, an inclination to throw his family into the shade. The consciousness

that he possessed influence was not his fault. He afterwards had the same consciousness of power in the prison of Egypt and the palace of Pharaoh, but sorrow had toned down his perception and softened his acerbity. David had the same inward swelling, yearning conviction; when but a shepherd boy he felt the glow of the soldier of the LORD, and when amid the meanest of the families of Judah his eye and his mien anticipated the king. He could not help this—he was right to rise to his high call. Yet Saul was provoked and Eliab was indignant at what he deemed the arrogance of his younger brother. If David were to blame, it was in the assumption of some manner and tone which were irrelevant and assuming. We can surely remember many such a case in the history of society where we have seen a conscious energy and power condemned at the moment owing to some untoward expression of it, yet verified by the result of after days. More than one celebrated instance exists on record of the presence of early genius and force being finally blighted by the rude and improvident hand of the critic.

Such was Elihu's general character; but the line he took in his argument and remonstrances is equally characteristic.

2. He opens his speech with a warm protest in favour of the fairness of God's dealings, and against the complaints set up by Job assailing the inequality of Providence. "Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the ALMIGHTY pervert judgment. Who hath given him a charge over the earth? or who hath disposed the whole world? If he set his heart upon man, if he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath; all flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust. If now thou hast understanding, hear his: hearken to the voice of my words. Shall even he that hateth right govern? and wilt thou condemn him that is most just? Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly? How much less to Him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all are the work of His hands. In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand. For His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He

is an end and object
man through sorrow
tells on the perfection

of his character :—“ For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed ; then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword. He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain ; so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen ; and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man his uprightness : then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit : I have found a ransom. His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s : he shall return to the days of his youth : he shall pray unto God, and He will be favourable unto him : and he shall see His face with joy : for He will render unto man His righteousness. He looketh upon man, and if any man say, I have sinned, and

perverted that which was right, and it profited me not ; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.” “ Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more ; that which I see not teach Thou me : if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.”

He then proceeds to show the power and omniscience of God in the thirty-fifth chapter : “ I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee. Look unto the heavens, and see ; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou. If thou sinnest, what doest thou against Him ? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto Him ? if thou be righteous, what givest thou Him ? or what receiveth He of thine hand.”

His complaint against Job is, not only that he has actually done wrong, but that his arguments are of a kind to fortify the wicked and to strengthen the position of God’s enemies : “ For Job hath said, I am righteous : and God hath taken away my judgment. Should I lie against my right ? my wound is incurable without

transgression. What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water? Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men. For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God. Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that He should do wickedness; and from the ALMIGHTY, that He should commit iniquity."

He then concludes his remonstrance in the magnificent language of the thirty-seventh chapter, in which he sets forward the greatness of the works of creation.—“Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God. Dost thou know when God disposed them, and caused the light of His cloud to shine? Dost thou know the balancing of the clouds, the wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge? How thy garments are warm, when He quieteth the earth by the south wind? Hast thou with Him spread out the sky, which is strong, and as a molten looking glass? Teach us what we shall say unto Him: for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. Shall it be told Him that I speak? if a man speak, surely he shall be

swallowed up. And now men see not the bright light which is in the clouds : but the wind passeth, and cleanseth them. Fair weather cometh out of the north : with God is terrible majesty. Touching the ALMIGHTY, we cannot find Him out ; He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice : He will not afflict. Men do therefore fear Him : He respecteth not any that are wise of heart."

Elihu then retires and God Himself answers Job. By the opening words of His address it would seem that God was not satisfied with Elihu's answer and saw faults in its tone as of one who "darkened counsel by words without knowledge."

Such is Elihu's speech, very intelligible and characteristic throughout. He is offended at Job's deviation from the recognised paths of simple religion into the more devious and intricate ones of a somewhat metaphysical search into the causes of apparent contradictions.

3. The two conditions of mind are best seen in contrast. We often do see them so in life. The following classes of men are frequent and familiar to our mind.

There is a man who sincerely serves and loves God. He desires to conform to His Will.

He says honestly, "It is good for me to be afflicted; blessed be the Name of the LORD." He can take a review of all his sorrows and sum them up in a catalogue, as Job does in the nineteenth chapter, and gazing on the long list can say from his heart, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He will stand at the latter day upon the earth." All this is clear to him—clear as an open vision of the future. He takes delight in it. He has no hesitation as to his faith in His love, His choice and His intense desire; nevertheless his mind is one which surveys and weighs everything. It sees the inequality of the law of God, if only the superficial view be taken: he goes down lower and strives to find some firm basis founded on the moral sense and the deeper condition of the progress of society. This appears to be a seeking for good wider but less certain than the teaching of direct inspiration. He derives comfort, confidence, confirmation, and strength from the consideration; and more than that, he feels that he is able materially to help others by taking this deeper under ground, others who have not yet found that comfort from revelation which they ought, and who are comforted and assured by the conviction and teaching of

a man who clearly has reviewed God's dealings and has weighed and calculated the apparent inconsistencies of the laws by which the world is governed, and having weighed them with anxiety and pain, has reached a conclusion satisfactory to himself and intelligible to them. This man accepts and defends the discoveries of science; he is not startled at seeming contradictions to commonly received opinions and data, and at last arrives at the conclusion that the doubt tends to confirm faith and that difficulty in the end clears away the clouds of mystery. He deeply loves the law which is inscribed on the page of revelation; nevertheless he suspects and often underrates the mind of him who thinks he sees truth gleaming on the surface of life, as if he gazed on letters of fire. Such was Job. Elihu could not understand him. Job was wrong in certain respects, but Elihu was so also. The latter did not understand the man of keenly inquiring mind agitated, as Job was, about the causes of things.

And so it often is with us. There are two classes of men among us; those who reach the end of faith through the gallery of inquiry, and those who rest in it from the beginning, and would shudder at having to ask the question

which they consider already finally rocked to sleep in the cradle of unsuspecting and unhesitating trust. There can be little doubt, but that the latter is the character we should cultivate, imitate, encourage. But while we do this, we may not depreciate, discourage, or hold in too light esteem the other. There will ever be Bereans in the Church, and they will sometimes be the "more noble" among us—men of higher and more elevated view, even though they reach it with difficulty and toil.

4. But Elihu suggests to Job the various modes of God's visitations and dealings with men. He refers to "the vision by night," the chastisement of personal affliction by pain upon his bed, and the ministration of "the messenger," the minister of God. All these he mentions as means by which God addresses the soul of the sinner; and Elihu expresses some surprise that Job should not more easily and heartily acquiesce in the justice of these dealings, without inquiring and searching so deeply into God's actions and motives. So many men of Elihu's kind are surprised at the difficulty which deeper minds feel, in at once being convinced by the more open and simple manifestations of God which to them

are plain and direct ;—so they are to them ; —and they may be happy that they are so. But though made plain by God to them, they are not so of necessity. They are not proofs, *per se*, though they become so to a certain condition of mind.

5. But I will analyse more minutely the objections and difficulties of Elihu, and thus I may throw more light on the kind of character I am speaking of. He first objects to Job finding fault with God for giving him trouble, as if he had any right to object to the ways and laws of Him Who made him ; he dwells on the direct and spiritual communions of God with the soul, and the immediate interpositions which He makes in behalf of His own people ; and looking on these, as clear and direct, as traced on the form of the visible world itself, he expresses his surprise that Job should not be open to them as “ influences ” and “ manifestations.” He expresses something like the feeling of the remonstrance of our Blessed Lord, “ Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me ? ” He tries to convince Job of the close connection between cause and effect in God’s dealings with His people, of the reality of His intentions in

every act of trial or humiliation to draw the soul of man out of some snare of Satan, some pit of destruction and danger, and to bring him near Himself. All this is to Elihu as a map drawn clearly out. He sees God's hand in everything; he sees the reason for which He gives each chastisement. He rises before him as if He were the form of a vision presented to the waking eye, he hears the foot-step, and he feels the touch.

Now Elihu's complaint against Job is, that *he* does *not* feel all this. He hesitates about this manifest connection between cause and effect; he searches more anxiously, decides more hesitatingly, and takes courage more cautiously. He searches into grounds and causes; he will not act by intuitions, he will have proof; he will look for guidings which may satisfy others as well as himself: may convince their reason as well as their imagination, their common sense as well as their strong spiritual yearnings. He does not feel *sure* that "the dream or vision of the night" is from God directly, and is intended for a warning to others, or to some particular case, and he refuses to obey its teaching in that way in which many others will. Another man under a strong impres-

sion that some line of action is a duty, expects everything will guide him with regard to it; sees everything through that atmosphere; notices all things as fingers pointing in one direction; and possessed in soul of one tune, imagines everything he hears is a note which tends to recall it.

a. The "*chastisement*" which comes *may* not be for this or that particular fault; it *may* not be a sign of any particular wrong conduct in the person receiving it, though it may be according to God's general laws; so one man refuses to acquiesce in the view taken by his friend; while he, on the contrary, seeing the exact suitability of the trial to himself and his own case, would think it akin to infidelity to hesitate as to the connection of cause and effect between the two.

Zacharias's deprivation of speech was "clearly connected with his unbelief," says one, "therefore was mine; I fancy I see a clear connection between my trial and my fault: I see God's immediate hand." Very good—so you may; but then when you go on to say, that every one else must also see the same connection, you insist on too much, and fall into "Elihu's" fault with Job. Another man, equally religious,

may only expect and only notice the working of God's general laws in all such particular cases.

b. So a national calamity falls on a country ; a pestilence travels from east to west ; a war breaks out and ravages a peaceful district ; a mutiny disturbs the foundations of a colony ; or famine wears out the energies of a passionate or energetic people. One man sees in all this a direct interposition of God for a particular national crime : he attributes it to a lax moral legislation ; to some neglect of respect for the Church ; to the carrying of a Divorce Bill ; or the desecration of the Sunday by parliamentary enactment. Not only does such a one see the connection, but he sees the *immediate direct* connection ; he sees the manifest correlation between the cause and the effect ; the retribution in kind—the *evident similarity* between the suffering and the sin. Another sees no such thing. To him, the whole thing depends upon general laws ; a general administration of God's system accounts for it, and the interposition of a direct personal Presence seems altogether needless.

Now each of these men are religious. The former appears to the latter an enthusiast ; the latter to the former a sceptic. But both are

religious, so far as this particular mode of reasoning is concerned; both may be humble, earnest, disinterested servants of God. The one applies a keener process of analysis, a more subtle investigation, a more close and minute judgment; the other stands more separate from close cause and effect, and concludes from simpler and more comprehensive premises. The one is a man standing on a mountain, and gazing on the scene below sees each object in its immediate and direct connection with another. The hill is the immediate cause of the river; the rivers channel out the valley; and the valley offers her bosom for the trees of the wood. The other man stands on the plain, sees the bold objects of nature around him, admires their exceeding loveliness, and looking upward to the vault of heaven, which spans the whole, reads there sufficient of the Divinity and comprehensive power of the Mind Which guides the universe, to rest satisfied without minute examination into the physical relation of causes and effects.

c. Or there is a question, which affects the discoveries and dicta of science. Scripture or the Church, require one mode of belief; scientific research appears to require another. How

is the balance to be struck? The one man says, "I take my stand upon God's unalterable word; I judge by the standard I have been used to from my childhood up. I have stood upon a rock; I have measured my gaze by the limits of a vista, which I refuse to make more expansive or less confined. The discovery of science seems to militate against these preconceptions; and I so dread the possible shock to the stability of religious trust, that I denounce science as of the Devil, and men of science as sceptics."

Another man says, "I believe in the just laws of God, and the laws which govern the universe; but I believe in the possibility of my having misunderstood them, or of the general and received opinion with regard to them having been laid upon false foundations. After all, the application of the term, 'laws of the universe,' is arbitrary, and I am willing to accept the discoveries of science as part of that source from which I must derive my knowledge or impressions with regard to what God's laws are. There is that uncertainty about language, that inadequacy in terms to convey ideas, that I am willing to hold my mind open and unprejudiced to receive farther views of truth."

Each of these men may be religious; full believers in God's nature and laws, and each equally desirous of obeying and fulfilling His will.

d. So of natural phenomena. To one class of mind, the solemnities of the thunderstorm, the abnormal presence of heavenly bodies, the comet or the meteor, the sudden appearance of remnants of an antediluvian world, the "sea and waves roaring" produce expectations of great coming events. There is a conviction that these circumstances and affairs of men below, are in singular harmony with the movements and appearances of heavenly bodies, so that the vault above seems but a mirage of the events that are transpiring on earth. To another mind there is no connection between the two. The one system moves in grand and solemn majesty singly, as a part of a whole, of which the movements of mankind are another portion; but having no more correlation than the separate elements of any one whole, or the various members which form one bodily system of life and action.

Now the two classes of mind I have described are very distinct; but both may be religious, and that in the highest sense; never-

theless, they will ever have a tendency to mistake and misunderstand each other. The one will ever see in the other narrowness, superstition, illogical conclusion, wisdom above what is written, an inclination to narrow the limits of Christian comprehensiveness. While on the man so judging will be thrown back the charge of latitudinarianism and scepticism, rationalistic thought and liberalism beyond the bounds of allowable charity; an individualism of judgment, which bids fair to destroy trust in God's great objective truth.

A hundred questions swell with their tributary streams this great flow of human contrariety. In it we find the difficulties which have arisen about "terms" in the formal or spiritual schools of theology, between the externalism of the Church and the individualism of her members.

But all this widens out far beyond the range of my present aim. I wish but to offer a solution to the difficulties apparently involved in judging of the cases of Job and Elihu, and to see how far these two men are types and representatives of a class.

In this great world of ours we need the exercise of a wide comprehensive charity. We

dare not be too severe in our judgment of our brother. We should not foster the formation of *schools*; and yet we do. There is a painful tendency in religious men to be narrow towards each other. The elder brother is too wont to stand outside, and refuse to come into the system which receives the penitent prodigal. The disciple of JESUS is too well inclined to say to the alien, "send her away." There is a wide under-deck on which multitudes may stand. There is a ground beneath the heaving waters and billows of expression and controversy, on which many may find a footing, who find no rest in the agitation of the upper surface.

In JESUS all find a home, a rest, a friend. "He knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust;" and our aim must be to be wide as He is wide.

There is more reason than, perhaps, we imagine for the kind of contrariety I have referred to. We do not know so accurately, as we imagine we do, what we please to call "the *laws* of God's kingdom." We know some of them, but some we guess. Some we follow, as from heaven; some we refuse arbitrarily. Disposition, circumstances, character, opportunity, ac-

count for the different views we take. We cannot help it; but we *can* help being severe in *judgment* on each other, and forgetting to apply to our brother the same width of standard, which, JESUS vouchsafe! may be applied to ourselves.

LXXVIII.

THE PROPHET AND THE PRIEST.

ELASTICITY IN THE CHURCH.

PSALM CXLVII. 2.

"THE LORD DOTH BUILD UP JERUSALEM: HE GATHERETH TOGETHER THE OUTCASTS OF ISRAEL."

1. THE distinction between the Prophet and the Priest is too remarkable to pass over. Their separate vocations and the manifest need of each, suggest so many thoughts in connection with the wants and crying deficiencies of the present day, that it is difficult while dwelling on the characters of the Old Testament to avoid touching on this subject.

The arrangements of God's Church are ever made suitable to the wants of man, and like the folds of a garment draping a figure, they will be sure indications in each swell and fall,

of the characteristics of the form for which they are made. But I may reverse this sentiment and say, if the plans and opportunities offered by the Church do not thus exactly represent the varieties of the forms of human nature, in the proportion in which they are deficient they are deficient in truth and reality; and that the Church herself, or the branch of it, obnoxious to such charge, is failing in her great commission. In man, whether considered individually or collectively, there are two tendencies, that towards order and settled habit, and that which restless and jealous of the restraint of fixed forms, is ever seeking for new energies, impulses and opportunities of original expression. The one his normal, the other his abnormal condition. The history of mankind, as well as of the Church, shows this twofold tendency.

In the case of individuals we see this clearly enough. A man falls into the routine of religious life and acts. He has learnt to pray night and morning in childhood, and he continues it to manhood. He has kept Sunday holy, attended Divine service, received Holy Communion for years, and he would not, on any account, drop the custom. He has abjured

swearing and blasphemy, shunned certain vices and pursued certain virtues. He is kind, benevolent, and self-sacrificing, and so entirely is his life formed on these habits that he could not imagine yielding them, except with existence. This is his normal condition. He may be earnest in the pursuit of all these, or he may not be, as the case may be. A fuller or fainter wind may blow the sail of his vessel. He may be performing these acts by the full energy of the HOLY SPIRIT, or he may simply be going in a groove without life, energy, reality, or spirituality of mind. That is not the question. This is his normal condition.

He discovers at length that a slumber is creeping over his eyes and his spiritual sense. He feels he needs some new energy, some new life, to quicken the form which is becoming corpse-like ; he needs some power to clothe his dry bones with flesh. The sail lags too windless at the mast. He starts ; he discovers, while he lay secure in his vessel, it has drifted into shallows. He will soon be aground. He looks out eagerly for a new gale ; be it the storm or the sudden wind of mid-day, to give his soul a new impetus.

This need, this desire, does not militate

against the recognized value of the ordinary means. But it is based upon those rules and laws of our nature which so strongly find their moral history illustrated in Scripture and the Church. God from the beginning has arranged the normal system under which men shall ordinarily fall; but while He has done this, He has never forgotten to provide for the case of the "outcast." The folds of the tabernacle have been extended so as to take in His own peculiar people; but there has been at the same time elasticity enough to enclose the sheep "not of the fold;" and power to extend the stakes, so as to encompass those who outlie the ordinary arrangement. "He has" ever "built up Jerusalem and gathered together the outcasts of Israel."

2. Abraham came up a stranger from a strange land to that which was to be the home of himself and his posterity. The hills of Canaan and the waters of Jordan broke on the eye of the father of the faithful, as the outlines of the inheritance which was to be the home of his children from generation to generation. The altar of sacrifice and the mode of the offering became the objective system of that religion, of which the Nature of God as far as He

was revealed by vision, intuition, or divine voice, was the creed. The religious became a civil term; and the early Patriarchal and Mosaic Church by degrees became synonymous with a secular polity and a national idea.

The tent of Abraham was not only the centre of the true worship of JEHOVAH, but also the resort of the wandering bands he had brought under his patriarchal sway; and the heir of the spear and the spoils of the conqueror of Chedorlaomer became also the inheritor of the promises of God and the exclusive and indisputable claimant to the blessings of heaven. So around Abraham God gathered a tabernacle, and for the ancestor of David "he prepared to build up Jerusalem."

But Hagar was an "outcast." Ishmael the earliest born was ejected. His exile cut him off from the spiritual as well as the temporal blessings, and the thirsty child of the desert lay bereft of earthly possessions, as well as cut off from the direct lineage of the people of God. The Ishmaelite in after days was to have no claim on the splendours or honours of Jerusalem, and the barren sands of Edom and the trans-Jordanic plains were to be the heritage of those whose brethren dwelt along "the rivers of waters"

which rolled between Carmel and Bethabara. But more, when Messiah should come, He was promised to the favoured line of Isaac; and the descendants of Ishmael, the Arab of the wilderness, were to find their future happiness in the fold which enclosed the "other" and alien "sheep."

Nevertheless, the light of heaven broke upon the sorrowing mother. The angel guided the thirsty boy to the fountain with the same voice with which he said to Hagar, "hold the lad in thine hand, for I will make him a great nation."

"God built up Jerusalem, but He did not forget the outcast of Israel."

He laid down His normal system for His own, but He had arrangements ready prepared for those who did not fall within its limits. So surely should we. Exclusiveness can be no feature of truth in the Church which has left millions unembraced by "some device;" and which offers no such elasticity in her system, be it from jealousy, antiquated fashion, or what not, as to show that she wishes to gather together "the outcast while she builds up Jerusalem."

The past is precedent for the present, and

the record of the elder Church becomes a guide to our own.

Time passed on : Jacob the younger inherited by God's predestination and his own selfishness, the birthright, and the blessing ; and the kid which purchased for his descendants the proud attitude of the kings of Salem, purchased also in one of their tribes the lineage of the Son of David. Around Israel and his descendants God built up the bulwarks and the towers of Jerusalem. Esau was an outcast. Nevertheless the voice of mercy reached his ear in the day of his exceeding bitter sorrow, and the same voice which declared to Jacob his splendid future announced to Esau that his dwelling should be "the fatness of the earth and the dew of heaven from above."

"The Lord built up Jerusalem, but He did not forget the outcast of Israel." He reared around His own the normal system, but He remembered at the same time the wanderer and the rejected. He provided for them also ; and the blessings of earth and heaven descended though in modified form on the rejected child of Isaac.

Joseph became an outcast in Egypt ; and Jacob and his children were joined to his cap-

tivity. But still God was with them building up their Jerusalem, by anticipation, in the land of Goshen ; and that work of the raising up of Jerusalem continued from generation to generation. No child of Israel was forgotten by God. He found his place in His great design. His wants and sorrows were met by the normal system of the Mosaic Church. The waste sand of the desert, the barren rock, the shores of the Red Sea and the Jordan, the lonely dwellings of discomfited Amalek amid their mountain fastnesses,—Balaam the false prophet and Balak the ambitious king, all alike were compelled to discover that a Hand they would not see wrote for Israel the “handwriting” which directed them by day ; an arm they could not feel, was spread around the wandering hosts of Canaan. The armies of Israel, the women and children, six hundred thousand crossed the Jordan, and entered the land which was about to be the home of kings, and the scene of the miracles of the prophets of the LORD.

God continued to speak by edict and law, by visits of angels, and by dreams of the night. His people were taught to feel that the walls of Jerusalem were being built, and that the

Temple of JEHOVAH was the refuge of the sons of Jacob.

But while this was the case there was a two-fold mode of teaching and warning. The ordinary worship of the sanctuary ; the usual and normal expression of the Divine will came through the lips of the Priest. But there were ever deviations from the regular road ; wanderers by the way, outcasts, abnormal conditions of society, which needed the especial warning, the direct application of God's especial will to the national or individual crisis, the voice which must be lifted in the street to utter directions or warnings which formed no portion of the established mode of intercourse with God. This was the work of the Prophet.

He stood beside the Priest to arrest those whom the Priest in his capacity did not affect. He "gathered together the outcast of Israel" while the Priest "built up Jerusalem." He had his eye ever on the wanderers from the fold while the administrator of normal processes had it for his work to keep the fold itself. So while to David, the ministrations of Abiathar announced the general will of God or the usual mode of approach to Him, the voice of Nathan found him out when he had strayed from the way ;

and the rebuke of Gad startled the king, when he had numbered the people. The absolution of Nathan freed the soul of the monarch from the bonds of a repented iniquity, and the offer of Gad gave him his choice between pestilence, famine, and war.

The prophet Ahijah met Jeroboam in the field, and by the rent garment, foreshadowed the division of the kingdoms; to the same man, when a king, standing by the altar at Bethel, another prophet came to denounce the idolatrous worship, and the sinful life of the usurper of the throne of Samaria. Ahab ascended the throne. His sins were many. The prophets in the cave cried aloud for redress. The instigation and machinations of Jezebel disturbed alike the peace of the kingdom and the regularity of religion. Elijah rose up. He met Ahab and warned him. He threatened Jezebel, and was threatened in turn. He predicted the fall of the one and the dreadful death of the other. Each prediction came true. The prophet was raised up for the immediate and peculiar crisis, and the voice of especial warning sounded along the solitudes of the wilderness of Samaria. With the crisis the remedy passed away. With the peculiar call the peculiar mission vanished.

Ahab died. And the chariot of fire waited to bear Elijah up to heaven. Born for the crisis, he disappeared with its conclusion.

Elisha succeeded him and became the medium of God's will amid scenes, on which the more direct ray of the heavenly will did not fall. And so to the end of the history of the Old Testament. Isaiah advised or rebuked Hezekiah when Sennacherib and the legions of Assyria swept over Judea, or when the king in his vanity displayed his wealth; and when he lay dying the prophet came with the direct message which the priest could not give.

The hosts of Nebuchadnezzar threatened the passage of the Jordan, and Zedekiah and his nobles trembled for the kingdom and themselves. Jeremiah rose up, the star of the midnight crisis, and the mournful pleadings of the prophet of Anathoth warned the people of their sins, or bid them take refuge in the captivity. The conquered tribes passed the defiles of Jericho under the banner of the proud Chaldean conqueror; and the mission of Jeremiah was completed and his voice silent. Yet by his side had stood the priest, and with the voice of immediate inspiration rose the accents of normal worship.

Daniel and Ezekiel consoled or cheered the faith of the sojourners of Babylon, and contrived to keep in memory the songs of Zion, when the harp hung silent on the willow, and the music of Salem sounded out of harmony with the chants of Bel. On the banks of the Chebar Daniel remembered Jordan and consoled his people by the mention of their future return.

So when the succeeding years were over, and the stone and the cedar of Lebanon again reared the sacred fabric on Mount Moriah, the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi uttered their voice of warning or consolation to the returned captives of the hosts of Israel.

3. Now my object is to apply this to the general history and condition of mankind in connection with the application and effect of spiritual influences. From the beginning it is clear that God has seen the need of a supply of the normal, as well as of the abnormal means, to meet our spiritual wants. "He knoweth our frame and remembereth we are but dust," and the history of the Old Testament is a continued illustration of the application of these principles.

He ever builds up Jerusalem, and at the same time gathers together the outcasts of

Israel. He is raising walls and outworks for His own peculiar people; but at the same time remembering the wants and providing for the failings of wanderers from the fold, who have strayed beyond the reach of his wonted voice. The two run together. The broad clear onward river of His ordinary means bearing the freight safely to the great ocean of eternity; and the countless irregular auxiliary streamlets which pour into it.

The times of the Gospel show the same tendency. The ministry of Jesus was aided by the Apostolic College, and when its powers were unequal to the growing wants of the Church, the Diaconate was added to swell its energies, and give greater width to its operations. There was no rigid unelastic limitation to the system of the Church; years rolled on, the Church grew in dimensions, commensurate with the Roman Empire and beyond it. The arrangements of the empire were to a certain point the most apt to be adopted by the evangelizers of the world, and the Church fitted her Patriarchal and Metropolitan Sees to its scheme; she made use of all she could to serve her purpose; she did not tie up her energies with the limits of past days,

nor consider that the same arrangement in degree or kind would suit the increasing wants of periods which advanced rapidly in their needs beyond those of the first century. She did not fear movement; she was not wedded to one mode of action, to one set of instruments, she saw and felt for the "outcast," though she built up Jerusalem, and provided for the abnormal population by abnormal processes.

But this is a subject of historic statistics: wide and vast in range. I refer to it as an acknowledged fact. Time passed on, and the Church, like an advancing tide, swept with her flood of spiritual waters the beach of the world as it swelled out to support the increasing populations. Her tide was an advancing one; the outside rim of her waves was never the same one day that it was the last, but ever took in a wider space as she receded a moment to gather greater force to accumulate a vaster volume of waters. She dreaded being outwitted by the world; she shrank from the charge of having a wisdom and energy inferior to that of its children. She was ever ready for the crisis; and her delight and glory was that while the world was wise, she was wiser; while the world was bold, she was magnificent;

while the child of earth strove with agony for the treasures of time, she strove to blood against sin and the devil ; while the world mined, she counter-mined ; while it reared hills, she reared mountains ; and on the pavement of earthly and corruptible empires, she raised the fabric co-extensive with them in span of foundation, but ascending to heaven in the roof and superstructure eternal and incorruptible. Why then are we fearful ? Why so alarmed lest we in the nineteenth century transcend the limits of the first ?

But as years rolled by, the outcast became more and more the necessary object of attention. The area the Church at first covered was small ; it spread itself ; the genius of Christianity was to expand ; the mustard plant grew toward heaven, and stretched out her boughs to the sea ; the roots which drank with thirsty eagerness the Jordan, sent forth boughs which shadowed either coast of the Mediterranean. But with missionary effort was missionary machinery. The savages of Spain, and the uncouth occupants of the forests and river banks north of the Pyrenees, needed some different instruments to those which were wanted for the Jew and the Ephesian ; those who had been pre-

pared for the Gospel and the Church by the figures of the law or the adumbrations of philosophy.

The Saxon, the Scandinavian, and the Norman, are witnesses of the elastic power of the Church to embrace within reach of her machinery, devised on purpose, every kind of character and the most remote inhabitants of the earth.

But events called for new instruments still. The Crusaders brought back with them the leprosy to Europe. The Leper was an outcast from society, unbefriended and shunned. Francis of Assisi saw and pitied a leper who lay near the gate of his own city. The Church had as yet no provision for this class of sorrowers, and the order of Franciscans arose; a new idea, and suggesting a fresh energy to the Church. The Reformation threatened to disturb the fabric of Southern Catholicism. Rome rose from her lethargy; Ignatius Loyola conceived and executed the order and society of the Jesuit, and a new and hitherto unknown machinery sprang into operation, late in time to meet an exigency, which developing circumstances had created.

But the events of society crowded thickly on each other in the sixteenth and following cen-

turies : with complicated conditions of the social body arose the need of new instruments to meet the demand. Brotherhoods in various forms, orders under varied rules, started into existence and did their work. The sorrows of prisons, and the demoralisation of convicts, the agonies of battles, and the sad scenes of hospital life, the countless legions of ragged children, and the huge multitudes which were springing into existence of uneducated and ignorant masses called aloud for a departure from the old *régime*, and new inventions were adopted to meet each crisis ; showing that while the Church built up Jerusalem she did not forget to gather together the outcasts of Israel. Homes of seclusion and contemplation arose for those who yearned after the life of retirement, and the mountain or forest sanctuary saw hundreds banded together by vows and rules hitherto unknown. I only mention all this to show that there was no such attachment to old *régime* in large portions of Christendom, which have borne the reputation of peculiar exclusiveness and severity, as to hinder the adoption of new devices to meet the cases of new conditions and wants of human society.

The normal system was preserved uninjured

and unimpaired, though the abnormal was carried on beside it ; and the walls and bulwarks of Jerusalem which rose in monotonous beauty were not considered as interfered with by the provision made for the outcast and the means devised for the banished.

The prophet stood beside the priest, the voice of the one not hindering attention to the well-known ministration of the other. The old tradition was preserved and handed on towards the end of time in the line of regular descent, but at the same time new plans were invented, which should be precedents for the future, or having done their work for the existing crisis, be absorbed into the general whole again.

4. Now let us apply this to our own day. When was there ever a time when we more needed the same elasticity than now ? and yet, how many schools of men there are which, for one reason or other, resist that attempt at a wider and less stringent system, as if precedent were in their favour ; which it is not. We have many builders of Jerusalem, but few gatherers of the outcasts of Israel. The followers of those teachers who have revived by word and example the usages of the Church of elder days, and recalled us to the recognition of Catholic

authority, have in too many cases sunk into a traditional reverence for the principles which first gave shape to their school, and in many things have allowed mannerism and conventionalism to take the place of reality in practice and truth in doctrine. In proportion as men do this the school becomes a sect, and the inclination grows daily stronger to limit and exclude, not to enlarge, and to gather outcasts.

The men who represented what was called high-churchmanship before this day, from a different reason, the dread of innovation and movement, or as the world sometimes hints, from the fear of breaking up monopoly or losing loaves and fishes, resisted with equal energy and tenacity the idea of alteration, adaptation, or popularizing in the system of the Church. On the other hand other schools, while they devote themselves to the "gathering in the outcast," neglect to build up the walls of Zion, and are indifferent to the claims of that Church whose fabric began to be reared by Apostles and Martyrs.

The world is indifferent to the claims of either; and careless alike of the fold, and the wilderness leave the flock to wander where they will. But to those who do care, there is a

duty clear and unmistakeable; and what is it in this day?

There is a wide demand, increasing, and alarming. Whatever reasons there were, in the succeeding ages of the Church of other days, to make the machinery of the Church elastic, there are tenfold more now. Our populations are swelling numerically to a size, which would make our grandsires stand astonished on the pavements of Manchester or Newcastle. The Parent Church, which received and offered ample room—for the parish of other days—rears its head now, the scarce recognised landmark of the thousands, which dwell within reach of its bell; and where many a spire started amid trees and fields to Heaven, they now simply break the monotonous lines of the straight roofs of tile and slate, which enclose in many a squalid room the thousands which have swelled the parochial population. Nevertheless the machinery of the Church among us to-day, in many cases, shrinks up within a compass, which makes it wholly inadequate to the wants of those enclosed within the limits of her parochial space; and the same staff of clergy, the same services, the same hours, the same arrangements, stand, to meet the case of thou-

sands, which were instituted to meet the requirements of tens.

And where are the outcasts? Caught up by Socialism or Rationalism, Schism or Mormonism, they plead that the walls of Jerusalem are too narrow, and the voice of the priest too rare to enable them to benefit by their ministrations. The natural remedy to this evil lies in the division of parishes, and the application of the parochial system to the increased wants of the people. If that system were the one which the Church adopted for the wants of her people ages since, it should be tenfold extended to meet the increased wants of to-day.

But, however, it is not simply numerical increase and changes in the population, with which we have to grapple; new elements of population have sprung up; new phases of work, which have given an entirely new appearance to affairs. There are fresh combinations of the masses of the people, which require not only increased, but a new *kind* of machinery suited to their peculiar and characteristic wants. The numerical increase alone has created complications in the conditions of society, and raised difficulties of a totally altered character to those with which men of other

days had to grapple. The hours of work in factories, and warehouses, coal-pits, and yards, unsuited to the hours of Divine Service, or other parochial ministrations, demand a special mode of appliance.

I will take some of these cases. The growth of the manufacturing population has produced the factory and its inmates : the cotton mill with eleven hundred hands, or the iron foundry with one thousand, are no uncommon things. The men employed in these are all the more intelligent from the mere fact of their occupation, which needing close attention, care and discrimination, brings out the intellectual faculties ; and gives a tendency to investigation and inquiry, which forms by degrees a very definite moral habit. But in proportion as they have gathered around the nucleus of the factory, in that proportion they have got beyond the reach of the ordinary parochial arrangement. Living within a circumference of two miles distant from their centre of work, they belong to perhaps four or six different parishes. Their local parochial connections have virtually broken up. They, at the same time, are compelled to form all their arrangements of hours and days according to the demands of the factory. Their evenings,

their Sunday, their opportunities of communion and intercourse with the clergyman are broken up and disturbed. A new centre is given to their occupations, and a new and contradictory interest has been raised to their parochial one. They no longer meet each other in connection with the common bond of parochial interest; but with the social and intellectual bonds of the manufacturing community; this from its very nature, with no external teaching, no voice of authority, where the cleverest has his sway, and gains his influence, at once forms a character and invests life with an interest not only different from, but contradictory to Christianity, and contrary to the genius and spirit of the parish.

Now to meet this want we clearly need some novel form of religious administration. We need a special arrangement suited to the condition and customs of the factory and coal-pit. The workmen are gathered within the narrowest possible space, under the control, to a certain degree, of one man, and if managed well, within reach of a certain amount of moral and social influence. They are at work in this sphere, through the hours of the day when they *can* be got at; and they are open to parochial

ministration only when they *cannot* be got at ; at least, with anything like the same facility. What effect then a clergyman might have whose one work was one such mill. Suppose him with a chapel built by its side, large, ample, and solemn. In connection with it schools, always open, devoted especially to the wants of the younger operatives, and the operatives' children. In some room lectures might be given every evening, to attract and entertain the workmen, drawing them away from scenes of worse resort. In the chapel, services might be adapted to the needs and peculiar capabilities of the artizan. By this means a clergyman might form an *esprit de corps* among the people of each separate work, in connection with the work itself, which would not only give enormous opportunity to the Church to preach and carry home her mission, but also might lead to heal the wound which opens so painfully in so many cases between the master and the men. The Church might step in, claiming it as her natural and legitimate province, to be a peace-maker between the two contending parties of our great commercial society. But to do this she must be able to throw out a new machinery. She must not simply go on building up Jerusalem,

but apply herself with elasticity to gather together the outcasts of Israel.

How, too, can we do without some form of orders, or brotherhoods, and that as a recognized form and system of Church administration? The contemplation of our large cities is appalling. Within a stone's throw of scenes of dazzling wealth and sumptuous luxury, the alleys and lanes of the squalid million reticulate the crowded acres of our metropolitan and manufacturing towns. There, in how many miserable homes, the dying lie cursing God or looking to the future, as to annihilation? or more affecting still, how many, on whose youthful mind the accents of religious teaching fell long years ago, lie stretched in lonely watching for the last summons, striving to recall words and impressions they had forgotten, and yet the very recollections of which, fleeting and evanescent as they are, fall like melancholy music on the tired ear of life: and in countless cases their cravings are never gratified! The phantoms never become a form. The dissolving view of the past never becomes photographed on the eye of death; and after years of sin and profligacy, infidelity and blasphemy, which intervened between childhood and manhood, the

soul goes to God to render an account, how appalling! What is to be done with these cases? The parochial clergy *cannot* meet them. They need seeking and searching out. They need the tender pleadings of an unfailing voice. They need the long night-watch, the unwearied and repeated call by day. Only the members of an order or a fraternity, bound together by the love of JESUS, can do this. They have the heart, and they have the time. Fishers on the waves of night, they cast their net into all waters, and might draw to the heavenly shore many a soul, which will then be infinitely happy for ever, instead of miserable past expression.

Oh! glorious, yet painful vision! Oh dream of unparalleled loveliness! Where are the men among us who resemble in spirit those who in other days cared for the outcast? Where are the fraternities of England, the energies parallel with her parochial system? The hands of Hur and Aaron uplifting the arms of Moses in the work of unwearied intercession? We look forth on to our wilderness, and see on all sides the hosts of Amalek, and our heart fails, lest there be not means to supply the remedy. JESUS have mercy on our land! And while the people of this country provide means to meet the case

of every temporal and ambitious want, do Thou in Thine infinite compassion teach Thy Church to "devise means" to bring Thy banished home !

Nor is this all, our ritual *must* be made more elastic, more fitted to the people, or they will slip through the meshes of the net we spread to catch them. The lengthened service, the elevation of its style, the monotony of its repetitions, its nice distinctions, make it scarcely able to meet the case of the uneducated, the uninitiated. We have to deal with all classes, and is it likely that the same form which suits the need of the finished Christian, or the highly philosophic mind, should catch the sceptic, the learner, or the dull ? Let us retain with some modifications the one, but let us in God's Name add by its side the form which may meet particular wants, and a particular crisis. This we have not done yet ; and the midnight shoals of our fishery slip through the meshes of a net which was formed for other spoils, and other water. We toil all night, and catch nothing, or we bring our net to shore at morning-tide, and behold its meshes are torn, its tackle broken. Oh, no, let us build up Jerusalem, and at the same time not neglect to gather in "the outcasts of Israel."

I have done ; not that the subject would be exhausted in the pleadings or argument of years. The means, which might be applied, ramify in every direction. We need elasticity, co-extensive with our complicated machinery of society. We need the same wisdom to catch souls, which our temporal yearnings have devised to amass wealth. We need a continual genius at work to devise means to meet the extraordinary demand. We want an unceasing forge, ever ready to prepare weapons for our assault on the stronghold of evil. Would to God our Jerusalem might be more and more beautiful, her symmetry more complete, her entireness unbroken ! May the sound of her Catholic teaching go forth unimpaired ; the notes of her Ritual ascend to Heaven continually, giving wings and energy to prayer ! May the exercise of her discipline give the impression to the world, that she represents the society of which all others are shadows and types ; but at the same time, in her love of order, and her devotion to the conservation of the past, may she not forget to devise means “ to gather in the outcasts of her Israel ! ”

LXXIX.

THE MEN OF NINEVEH AND THE MEN OF ENGLAND.

NATIONAL SINS AND NATIONAL REPENTANCE.

S. LUKE XI. 32.

"THE MEN OF NINEVEH SHALL RISE UP IN THE JUDGMENT WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SHALL CONDEMN IT: FOR THEY REPENTED AT THE PREACHING OF JONAS; AND, BEHOLD, A GREATER THAN JONAS IS HERE."

1. NATIONAL calamity naturally turns the eye to investigate the causes which lurk in the national history,—and the sorrows of Hindostan compel us to inquire into the virtues or vices of English rule. The roll of the book in which is written, "lamentation, and mourning, and woe," whether it records public, or domestic affliction, may be read two ways,—as a sign of God's mercy, or of His justice. The two views become nearly one at last; and if God sees fit

to send chastisement on His people, who rebel against His laws, to deter them and others from committing the same again, this deterring punishment, becomes a protection from future trouble, and the temporal calamity is in one sense substituted for the eternal. Nevertheless, there are essential differences in the two views in their practical detail, with regard to the condition of mind, in which men should take the afflictions which fall upon them. The suffering which is called down by sin leads directly to an altered and humbled life, contrition of heart, and penitential act and confession : whereas the trial which we popularly call *chastisement*, finds no inconsistency in a spirit of cheerfulness and confidence in the sufferer, an impression that God approves, instead of condemns the past ; and that the work of the afflicted is rather to perfect virtue, than to extirpate vice ; that addition rather than diminution is the work which lies before him ; and that the painter's, rather than the sculptor's office is his, in producing the character God requires.

It has been the instinct of nations to revert to moral causes to account for public calamity. Heathen Nineveh bewailed sins not hard to discern, which had brought down God's wrath,

—and a population sitting in sackcloth and ashes told plainly enough that the proudest nation of Asiatic antiquity was willing to detect a just and irresistible arm in the sorrows which were bursting on it. It was not so wonderful that Jerusalem should have done the same,—her teaching was deeper, her revelations more direct: the harassing skirmish of the Philistine, and the darker clouds of invasions from Assyria or Egypt, were at once circumstances which the prophet declared and the people acknowledged to be the just and natural punishment of God; and the melody of many a psalm, the mournful beauty of numberless hymns of supplication, are memorials enough of the people of God viewing national calamity as a moral retribution; or the exile of Babylon remembering it as the opportunity given for repentance.

The prophecy of Daniel alone would be enough to show how evidently true it is that no trouble bursts on a people, unless it be the chastisement of sin. The transcendental extacies of Isaiah, and the melancholy complaints of Jeremiah; the severe and untempered rebukes of Amos, and the trenchant irony of Haggai; all bear to the same point, all guide

our eye to the same lesson, that, when a people are in sorrow, it is a sign that they have sinned.

But mere heathen antiquity reveals the same conviction on the minds of men who were unenlightened by direct revelation.

National calamity, whether the produce of human or natural causes, was viewed as the direct indication of the will of the Divine Being. The overflow of the Tiber, or the defeat of invading armies; the famine produced by scarcity of harvest, an alarm of war; the pestilence which raged periodically from the stagnant marshes of Latium, a meteor, an eclipse, or a convulsion in the atmosphere, were at once viewed with awe by the heathen,—not only as the instruments of danger and death to the inhabitants, but, as indications of Divine wrath for the sins of the people. Rome, kingly, republican, or imperial, bears witness to the fact, that the heathen mind traced back national calamity to national sin.

Nor was it otherwise in Greece. With a more intellectual and philosophic, and a less direct and social view, the dramatists and philosophers of Athens, saw in great national disasters a handwriting on the wall, which induced

them to trace back the lines which led to the Hand which wrote, and *that* they proclaimed to be Divine. The "Agamemnon," or the "Prometheus," display a mind, which not only searched for moral causes in temporal events, but solved human difficulties by the recognition of Divine vengeance, and retributive justice, applied through the Hand of the Creator. As I have shown, Nineveh in remote antiquity quailed before the storm of approaching trouble; and believing the prophet who declared it to be from God, repented in sackcloth and ashes, and averted the calamity by penance and humiliation.

The most savage condition of heathens bears its witness to the same truth; the marauders of forest solitudes, or the tribes of the prairie and the wilderness, propitiate an unseen Being by human sacrifice, or self-immolation when success does not attend their army, or famine stalk around their tents. The world in every period, population in every phase, have carried onward the same lesson, that the presence of great sorrow, is a sign of an angry God, and the means of remedy are alone to be found in penitence and earnest intercession.

2. But while this must be acknowledged on

all hands, there is an intermediate ground, which some are inclined to occupy, which is highly insecure and untenable. "True," many are inclined to say, "there is a Divine cause to all things, and adversity as well as success, woe as well as weal, come from heaven; but I do not feel the necessity for immediate and particular acts of expiatory worship, or believe in the efficacy of fasting, humiliation, and intercessory prayer!"

Now this is simply an untenable ground. Either one thing or the other is true; either all, or nothing, is to be believed; if God revealed through the second Person of the Ever Blessed TRINITY, is the Governor, and the *moral* Governor of all things, then not a "sparrow falls to the ground," or a hair perishes on the head without His Will; and still less can creatures fall, or thousands perish by man's act. By His Will the towers in Siloam fell, and by His direct interposition, Pilate mingled Galilæan blood with the sacrifices; and if a particular providence is true, inasmuch as God permits His acts to us to be influenced by our acts to Him; the particular providence which directs the fall of individuals or societies, will be influenced by the particular intercession; and the storm which has been gathering to

punish particular sin, will be scattered, when that sin has been repented of, by confession, restitution and prayer. There is no middle ground; it must be one or the other, and if we attempt a middle position, we must be driven back to one of the horns of the dilemma.

3. What then have been our faults which have brought down calamities so disastrous on our colonial empire? Each nation has its own fault. It of course is made up of the aggregate fault of all its people,—but these sins are not always what we should call *the* national fault. A mighty mass of sin may be like a dead weight on a people, sending up to heaven a steaming incense of impurity and debauchery, nevertheless by the resistance of the majority to these sins, or the legislative enactment passed to curb them, or the strong protest of leading men and those high in authority, the sins however multitudinous *may* but be counted as the signs of national depravity, but simply the faults of the individuals which compose it; while a less amount of sin committed by the people to which the national character gives its imprimatur, and the national genius gave birth, —to curb which no legislative enactment is passed, nor effort on the part of the government made will ascend to heaven with the cry

of a national sin, and bring down from God the punishment, which to the eye of nations will be national chastisement. The national vanity which induced and was flattered by the ill fated expedition to Sicily was peculiarly a national fault in the Athenians. It sprang from the Ionian characteristic and was endorsed by the voice of the multitude, and of those who led Athenian politics ; and while the advice of sages was by, there was no mistake as to the national character of the crime. But when certain celebrated acts of cruelty and oppression were perpetrated by the same people, which when placed before them in their true colours they recoiled from, then the sin, though the immense majority were committed to it, cannot in the same way be called national, as it was ratified by the calm deliberate judgment of the people, or dependant on the caprice of a passing moment of national impetuosity ; attribute impetuosity to them if you will, but not cruelty. The Sicilian expedition brought on calamity and ruin,—it was heaven-sent.

The faults which deserve the name of national, are then those which being the produce of the national character dependent on the characteristics of *aboriginal* race or circumstance have been made the accepted line of

conduct and feeling of the great multitude. In this way vanity and ambition may be among the faults of French character : duplicity and jealousy of the Italian ; revenge and bigotry of the Spanish ; scepticism and daring speculativeness of the German ; and pride and self-reliance of the English. Strong leading faults, besetting sins have their accompanying growth of other faults whose life depends on theirs, and their decay on the destruction of their roots. Like parasitical plants they cling to and derive nourishment from the branch of another characteristic trait, and while deriving their support originally from that source, the life they draw is indirect and mediate.

So in individuals we sometimes see the habit of lying and untruthfulness formed, where really they are alien to the natural disposition, and simply are used as instruments to indulge and satisfy ambition ; or severity and harshness in manner may be shown, where the kindness of heart really directs the character because the predominance of jealousy may provoke them, or intense absorption in some aim of life produce an unnatural irritability. So lukewarmness in religion, an apparently leading fault in the English nation, is the parasite which clings to her national pride.

Our leading national fault is pride. The worst form of pride is independence of God, and dependence on the internal resources of our own nature and character alone. To this fault we have lent ourselves; and the excess of it which we have pursued, has been in the direction of undue reliance on those powers which in due measure God intended us to apply.

We have then to see that the national fault has been and is, of the kind I have described; and then, to discover what those penitential acts are, which being restitutive of our faults, may, we hope, lead God in His mercy to remove calamity and sorrow.

It is not hard to see illustrations of our fault. It is that which we as a people have in common with Saul as an individual. And when we come to remember, that the very essence of religion is dependence on God, reliance on a Power external to ourselves, though manifested in and through ourselves, we have reason to tremble, if we find we have been pursuing a contradictory line, lest we fall into infidelity and sceptical contempt of religion; and wreck our vessel on those shoals and quicksands, which must inevitably, sooner or later, wreck and swallow up the people who have committed themselves to such a course.

The sins of the Jews were expiated by repentance, and that repentance was the act contradictory to their sin. Wilfulness and obstinacy were their leading faults inclining to idolatry; being willing to be guided by God, and to bend their neck beneath His yoke, were the penitential acts of restitution which God prescribed to them. He permitted the natural results of obstinacy and selfishness to fall upon them, so making punishment and fault stand in the relation of cause and effect. They fled before their enemies through choosing their own ways, and discovered that *their* ways were wrong, and only God's right. They learnt this by experience. It was their punishment; they cried aloud to God, they acknowledged the mistake they had made; He heard them, and accepted them; the punishment was removed.

Nineveh had sinned in sensual lusts and appetites. The great city was penetrated with sensuality. God threatened them with the ruin of those means which had pandered to and provided for their luxury. They fasted and lay in sackcloth. It was the act contradictory to their hitherto love of ease. God forgave them and suspended the punishment threatened.

Our national independence of character has led to the like results. It has led us to depend-

ence upon the arm of flesh, to the resort to human machinations and human wisdom ; not to the words of heavenly guidance, or the gifts of grace.

A conscious power of perseverance and indomitable energy ; a strong sense of success ; a feeling of the influence of prestige ; these are the arms with which we have fought, and the bulwarks against which we have leant. They are most important national supporters, and speak of a national character of no small power and beauty. But if they lead us to stop with themselves, they at once become sinful.

3. We have shown all this in our want of firm, clear, direct, recognition of God and His grace, as the great end and directing power of all things. A full view of His Nature and the characteristics of Christianity, would have made us feel that at all hazards we were bound to assert and to stand by them ; that they contain an inherent power of support and direction ; that in the possession of them we are safe. Instead of which we have consolidated colonial possessions, and tampered with the religious creeds of their original populations, under the cry that without such compromise, our tenure of such countries was not secure. What is this but saying, " If we offend the Hin-

do by declaring his religious creed false, we shall lose our possessions, *because* we lose the sympathy and aid of the idolater. But if we offend God, we do not fear the result, as we can retain our possessions without Him." This is simply saying that, either we do believe in God and insolently defy Him, believing that the physical power of the idolater can do more than He can, by His word and grace ; or that we do *not* believe in Him at all as a *reality*, but that we speak of Him and His attributes as a conventional mode of expression, when it is convenient for us to recognise some feeling higher than sensuality ; or to bring to bear some principle more softening and elevating than human law. But this will not do. Let us be either one thing or the other. Either Christians, and have moral courage enough to stand up for our creed ; or be infidels, and fall back on the honesty of original heathenism. There is scarcely need to verify by illustration these reflections. Our timid policy, the homage paid to heathen customs by British companies and British governors, and made compulsory on the soldiers of our army,—these surely are signs sufficient of our reliance on the arm of flesh, rather than on that of grace : on the conciliation of human good-will, rather than on the

love of Him in Whom we profess to “live and move and have our being.”

Let the gates of Somnauth and the chariot of Juggernaut bear witness to the fact I am asserting.

We have feared to disturb the reliance of the Mahommedan in the Koran, or the Hindoo in his filthy and loathsome worship, till they have at length come to imagine that we are but little persuaded of the truth of a religion for which we do not care to die. *They* will carry theirs with fire and sword. *We* will not carry ours with persuasion. *They* so believe in theirs as to offer up themselves and mankind around them as holocausts on the altar of their idols; *we* have feared to lose a city or disturb the tranquillity of a village for the sake of propagating ours. And yet *ours* is that Faith for which Apostles devoted their lives, and Martyrs bled by the stake, the beast, and the axe; whose advancing banners waved over the tombs of those who had laid down their lives with delight for the cause they loved,—and who proclaimed at the risk of the “loss of all things,” the Gospel to the heathen who had not known it. The dissolution of an empire would not have stayed their energy, nor the chance of the alienation of Gentile tribes have made them

pause in proclaiming the message of the King of kings.

But the *reason* of our conduct is what I am now concerned with. It arises from an impression that we shall better retain our earthly possessions by securing the goodwill of man, than by depending on the arm of the God of hosts.

And here, by the way, it is important to remark that the very defence we have put forward in justification of our aggressive policy, has been that we are bound "to civilise through the means of Christianity," and to carry the knowledge of the Gospel of peace wherever we make our sway felt." But we have *not* done this. We have only confirmed the heathen in their false creed, and rooted in them more closely than ever their conviction of its truth. We have proclaimed the Cross to make it despised, —and the Name of JESUS to give the impression of its inability to retain hold on the affections and devotion of His followers.

Spain was cruel when she conquered America. Pizarro and Cortez won no laurel crown from mankind for the mercy they showed in their terrible advance of devastation. But the messengers of the Church proclaimed the Gospel of peace to ears in which only the shout of the

victor had been heard ; and the heralds of heavenly mercy forced their way in the rear of the soldiers of Castile to bind up the broken-hearted, and to set the captive free. The nation recognised as one motive for her war of conquest, the introduction of Christianity ; and she did not hinder its admission by any fear of results on the conquered people. She avowed, and acted upon her avowal, that the arm of the LORD of hosts was all-sufficient. She testified the sincerity of her profession, by permitting the Church to do her best in the regions she subdued. Human cruelty may have marked the advance of her soldiers, and the names of Pizarro and Cortez have become proverbs of terrible severity ; but no doubt was cast over the minds of the subdued natives as to the sincerity of the belief of their conquerors in the tenets they professed, or the reliance which they reposed in the power of Him Whom they acknowledged as God. *At least* their after-acts did not destroy belief in their Catholicity ; and whatever be the faults of the conquerors of the new world, they stand on the page of history with the stamp of reality and consistency upon their character.

The fault, then, in ourselves, which we may conceive to be the leading one of our national

character, is that of pride and independence ; and our line in the policy I have just alluded to, shows that we have more dependence on our own resources than on the Heavenly Power which we profess to believe in, to worship, and to exalt.

4. But this spirit is shown in other ways. Our eminent success as a commercial empire has tempted us to show pretty clearly how much we rely on those means which the love of gain has enabled us to amass as the *real power* by which we hope to make our nation great, and to overcome the difficulties which may ever and anon arise in our path. When the pure and self-sacrificing service of God has come into competition with our mercantile advance, we have generally found a reason to justify our compelling the latter to yield to the former. For years our institutions were gaining ground and achieving success in colonies where scarcely a minister of the Church was present, to instruct, warn, or aid those whom we had exiled for life from the advantages of home to rear our colonial fabric in a distant land. Millions were swelling our coffers at home, wrung from the untiring energies of men, who with their outward man decaying by daily exertion, found few spiritual remedies and appliances for th-

inner man. The appointment of a Bishop to preside over the religious wants of Hindostan, the largest territorial portion of our Empire, was a matter of tardy recognition; and the spiritual means bestowed there and elsewhere, have been until lately of slow and hesitating growth. Meantime, we have shown no backwardness in advancing our social position by every conceivable means which lay in our power.

It has been the same at home. The tardy increase of such ministrations as recognise the purely spiritual wants of our people; the withdrawal of aid or countenance to efforts of religious societies once granted, lest offence might be given, or political or social success retarded; show how little commensurate with the temporal has been the spiritual policy and energy of our people. And while this has stamped the acts of governments and legislative bodies, the tendency of the population has been too apparent. No parsimony has been shown in the devotion of power, health, and life to the amassing money and establishing commercial credit. While the calls of the Church to the practices of other days—oft Communion—Daily Prayer—increased means of grace—have been met with jealousy, or repelled with sarcasm. Discredit

has been thrown on the reasonableness of any religious system which proposed to levy an increased demand on the spiritual attention of the people, and the mantle of religious opportunities has been allowed to shrink up, while the folds of that of secular energy have been permitted to swell and multiply. Sunday has borne witness to the same fact. Whether in themselves good or bad, opportunities of travelling, amusement, and recreation have rapidly increased, and no proportionate increase of religious exercises has been shown; on the contrary, a decreased one.

Such seem some of the expressions of our national pride; the hesitation ere we proclaim a public fast,—the indifference felt about the value of united national prayer,—the sneer raised at the idea that fasting and abstinence are weapons which Jesus recognises,—the inclination to fall back on second causes and second motives,—the impression that sanitary regulations are the preventives to pestilence and *not* intercession to God; and that compromise with heathen tribes secures our frontier better than casting our care on God. Would that we would do the one, and not leave the other undone!

Nineveh repented. She performed acts contradictory of her fault, and God accepted her.

We have the same path open. It is ours to show we care more for God than dominion ; for the Apostolic Creed than for the traditionary rule of ages. It is ours to show that we will dare all things, leaning on the everlasting arm ; venture nothing while there is a chance of His not going forth with us to battle ; to spread the Church co-extensively with our empire ; and to base its pillars on Her secure and well-prepared foundation. It is ours to care more for the worship and honour of God than the recreation of the people ; and to believe that in the due observance of Sunday—the due consideration for Divine Service and Holy Eucharist, we shall gain more by His favour, alike in blessing the land and relieving the load of care from our people, than by pandering to popular cries to secure popular support, or yielding to nineteenth-century opinions at the expense of Catholic Creeds. Take heed lest we contradict our past by our future—foul the onward tide of generations till it pour its volume of polluted waters to the beach of after-days. Then, and only then, as in Nineveh the voice of joy and gladness was heard again, so in our streets will the cry of those who prosper be heard rising as from a “ field which the Lord has blessed.”

LXXX.

Old Testament Contrasts.

BALAAM AND SAUL.

CONSISTENT WICKEDNESS AND INCONSISTENT PROFESSION.

MALACHI III. 18.

**“THEN SHALL YE RETURN, AND DISCERN BETWEEN
THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED, BETWEEN HIM
THAT SERVETH GOD AND HIM THAT SERVETH HIM
NOT.”**

1. It is wonderful to remark the numberless shades of character among wicked men: the various modes and ways which they have of acting against God. One man is a professed infidel; another is one in practice. One man professes to fear God, while he loves and follows self. Another regards neither God nor man in his reckless sinfulness; another sins with the hope of atonement by superior virtue, or errs under

- the excuse of human frailty. But all equally offend God. It is startling how many ways men have of sinning against their Maker. The character of Balaam was that of a very sinful man, in his mode of offending God. Strikingly different to him, yet equally offending God, is the character of Saul, King of Israel.

The fact of a man's being raised up to bring about a certain end, does not excuse him in acting wrongly, if to gain that end he does act wickedly. He may not know that God has raised him up for this object, though, perhaps, after events show that He has done so. Yet the man himself fully knows what is right and wrong; he is fully able to do right or wrong if he choose; he is able to do it as well as others. This he knows and feels; never mind what part God intends for him in the general scheme of His kingdom. This does not matter. We are not obliged to know this, and very often we never do know it. This is certain, God does not drive a man against his will. If he chooses to do right, he can, he may, he should; he is able. We have no right to meddle with God's intentions. What can we know about them? Perhaps it is said, "But God does make use of some men for

evil, or raise them up.” Very true; that is, when they have had good and bad placed before them; when they have had abundant opportunity and power to choose which they like; then, if they quietly choose the bad, God may make use of their evil choice, to punish or chasten others. It may be said, “But God knew He would before.” Perhaps He did; I may say, of course He did. But what is that to us? We do not know now what God intends about us; yet we do know we can act rightly if we like, with God’s grace. We cannot say, “We will do nothing, because God may intend us for harm.” God forbid any should be influenced by such a view. No man would hold back his hand from sowing a field in spring, because there may be a bad harvest, which is in God’s hands, and which God well knows how to prosper. We should rather say, “God overrules all for good. We may act as we will, as we feel inclined about religion. God is willing to help us. But He overrules our conduct for good.”

For instance, Pharaoh’s conduct was doubtless overruled by God for good—to show forth His power. Still Pharaoh acted calmly and coolly; he might have acted rightly if he

liked. He was hardened. Why? Because he neglected opportunities: and Pharaoh's history is the history of every man now, who going on against conviction becomes hardened; or is hardened by God, i.e., through God's way of governing the world; and then, when he by his own fault and choice sinned, God took his bad conduct and made use of it for the good and instruction of others. Or take JUDAS. We do not know that he could not have turned and become obedient to JESUS CHRIST if he liked. JESUS would have saved him if he had only listened to conscience, and taken the grace offered, i.e., in receiving the sacrament. But he would not. God knew he would do it, for He knew who would betray Him; but that does not alter his case.

So it was with Esau and others, whose characters I have examined more particularly already.

2. I have said enough for my point, which was this. In finding fault with Saul persons might say, He could not help it. "I gave thee a king in Mine anger." He was appointed for a punishment. Saul was a remarkable character. He had very good points, and very bad points. He was strikingly different to Balaam.

His leading good point was a peculiar independence and freedom from petty vanities and irritations.

There is one remark of a general nature I would make. When God does allow persons to do good by their bad conduct, it is a very terrible thing, but we may generally see that it is a just punishment on such persons for very wrong conduct; for acting against conscience; for neglecting opportunities and warnings. Therefore in a certain way, we may say, that God did punish Saul. Perhaps God may, after great provocation, or neglect of a certain kind, withdraw His preventing grace, and let a man go more quickly and less checked to ruin. And this, perhaps, explains why David is called a man after God's own heart, while Saul was so signally bad.

a. The announcement of Saul's being elevated to the throne of Israel came upon him suddenly; but seemingly without unsettling him. He kept it secret, leaving it to Samuel who had told it him to reveal it abroad; and having returned home, we find his conduct as follows: "And Saul's uncle said unto him and his servant, Whither went ye? And he said, To seek the asses: and when we saw that they were

nowhere, we came to Samuel. And Saul's uncle said, Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you. And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spake, he told him not." Thus he made no boasting of a matter which made him truly great; and so far did he carry this, that when the Divine lot fell upon him he hid himself, and was not discovered by the people till God showed him.

His appointment was disliked. "The men of Belial said, How shall this man save us? and they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace."

Soon after the Ammonites invaded the land, with the intention of enslaving it. They sent for Saul to help them, and "Behold Saul came after the herd out of the field." And Saul said, "What aileth the people that they weep?" and they told him the tidings of the men of Jabesh. And the Spirit of God came upon Saul, and his anger was kindled greatly and his direction for gathering the army was immediately obeyed, and a decisive battle won. And there was a cry, "Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? Bring the men that we

may put them to death. And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day. For to-day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel." Thus he was a man of calmness, dignity, and noblemindedness, and his success was conspicuously great, for he was victorious on every side.

b. Saul was not wanting in generosity and a feeling of gratitude; and he seems very willing to grant his bitterest foe his due, and to remember the claims of gratitude and better feeling in the midst of all his enmity. Thus his first love to David continued at intervals, although he envied him his praise. And when he pursued David in the Wilderness, and the latter found Saul asleep in the cave of Engedi, and with a noble generosity spared his life, Saul felt his kindness. For we find, when David had made an end of speaking, that Saul said, "Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I. For thou hast rewarded me good, when I rewarded thee evil." And then again, when Saul lay encamped at Hachilah, and slept in his tent, and David came and stole away his spear and cruse, and then awoke Saul

from sleep. Then the King of Israel again acknowledged his error, and said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will no more do thee harm. Behold I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly." Then again Saul said to David, "Blessed be thou, my son David. Thou wilt do great things, and also shalt still prevail." And in the following chapter we find, that, on David's going to Gath, on Saul's being told of it, "he sought no more again for him." Nor did he send again for him to injure him, till the day of his death.

So we find a generosity about Saul, a willingness when convinced to confess himself in error, a willingness to give even his enemies their due, which is worth remarking.

He was calm, high-minded, generous, and candid. A brave man he was without doubt.

Now, then, take a deeper insight into Saul's character, and we shall find those deficiencies which he certainly had, for which God "raised him up in His anger," for the chastisement of His people.

The first duty of every man is the fear of God, a reverence for His Word, a love towards Him, a desire to obey Him, and all this would

be most peculiarly the duty of the king of Israel. Saul "lacked this one thing." He was never under an abiding sense of religion, or what Scripture calls, "the fear of God," however much he was sometimes softened and touched. Men are sinful in different ways. Samuel and Eli both were inconsistent. But they lived by faith—a weak faith. True. Some have sudden falls, like David; others are corrupted by prosperity, as Solomon. As to Saul, he seems to have had no abiding religion at all. His character shows us a man may be virtuous, amiable, and generous, without the grace of God.

His unbelief and fearlessness of God seem to have been shown by a contempt alike for prophet and priest. Thus while in search of his father's asses, he came to the city where Samuel dwelt, and though Samuel was an old man, and became from childhood a remarkable minister of God, yet we find Saul considered him as a mere diviner, who would tell him his way for the "fourth part of a shekel of silver."

Again, just after, when God gave him a new heart to prophesy, all his acquaintance said—"Is Saul also among the prophets?" which shows how strange they thought it to his general character to prophesy.

The immediate cause of his rejection was his impatience at the arrival of Samuel and his own offering up of the sacrifice, which appears to have been a double sin, as he says, "He forced himself to do so," which proves it to have been against his conscience and conviction of what was right.

He rejected Samuel and had recourse to others instead. Abimelech followed his camp; and Saul said, "Bring hither the ark of God;" while it was brought, a tumult among the Philistines increased, and Saul irreverently put the ark aside, and went to battle.

We must observe that there was no profaneness nor intentional irreverence in Saul's conduct. He was still on the whole the same as he had ever been. He outwardly was respecting the law of Moses; but he was inwardly irreverent towards God.

After this, he was commanded to go and kill the Amalekites and Agag. But he followed his own inclination, and spared Agag and the rest alive, and he did so not merely from wilfulness, but we are told it was from a respect towards the opinion of man rather than God's command. "He feared the people and obeyed their voice." It is remarkable

that while he spared Agag, he tried to kill the Gibeonites whom Joshua had promised to save alive. This he did in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah.

From the time of his disobedience in the matter of Amalek, Samuel came no more to see Saul. The evil spirit exerted its full influence over him, and Saul grew worse and worse. This, then, is his character. In his youth he was unassuming and forbearing. In advanced life, proud and gloomy, cruel, revengeful, and hardhearted, which he was not in his youth. His injurious treatment of David is a long history. But his conduct to Abimelech, the High Priest, was cruel in a high degree. Eighty-five priests were slain. Nob the city of the priests was smitten with the sword and all in it destroyed.

Last of all he finished his sad history by an open act of apostasy from God. He began by consulting Samuel as a mere diviner. He steadily pursued his evil way, and finally it brought him to consult the witch of Endor. God met him in the sorceress's cavern. But He met him as his foe. Samuel tells him he is to be taken away in God's wrath, and the next day, the haughty king was numbered with the

dead. He died by suicide : the act of an unbeliever. This then is his character.

c. Unbelief and wilfulness are ever deaf to the plainest commands, and produce a heart hardened against the most gracious influences. Do not suppose I consider Saul's state of mind to be something very unusual. 'God forbid it should exist in its full development any where among us ! But surely there is not any one who may not trace in himself the element of Saul's sin !

3. There is one person who offers a singular contrast with Saul,—Balaam.

The leading difference was : the one was under a strong abiding sense and influence of religion, and the fear of God : the other not. The one trembled before a God he was forced to confess ; the other appeared to respect a Deity, Whom in heart he despised. Balaam knew what religion was ; felt it, valued it, was convinced of it. Saül knew, but calmly scoffed at and despised all he knew. The one was the religious man grossly inconsistent ; the other, the man with no religion, yet wearing it as a garb. The one had received God's Spirit and strove to quench it, though the brilliance of its inward flame made it difficult ; the other had

quenched the first spark of the spirit, and therefore never knew its lustre. Such is the history of their religious character. Their natural and moral character were equally different. Balaam was weak, inconsistent, and cowardly. Too fearful to be decided; too avaricious to be independent; too mindful of the opinion of man to be obedient to the God whom he inwardly felt to be true: yet too much convinced of the awfulness of that eternity to which he went, to give full vent to his timidity and selfishness. We have in Balaam the exact picture of a weak man and an inconsistent Christian.

Saul was bold, decided, and fearless—so fearless that he dared to defy the very God before Whom Balaam trembled. The fact was, he had no inward fear of Him—no regard for Him. He made religion a mere instrument for worldly ends—the mere tool of power and ambition: he was an unbeliever; though in life and form a Jew; his knee bent at the ark, though his heart lingered after the world. He respected the priest, because the Church was the road to influence; when he stood in his way he destroyed him without regret. He consulted the prophet when he wanted his advice, he did without him, or made use of sor-

cery, when the prophet stood him in no stead. It mattered not, if it were Samuel or the witch of Endor, so as his selfish ends could be gained ; so as he could conceal his unbelief from the eyes of those whose favour he wanted. He cared not how boldly he defied God. How cool or intrepidly, he acted as an unbeliever. He concealed Agag from the eyes of Samuel, but cared not to spare him in the sight of the LORD ; and having run his race of cool, calm, calculating indifferentism ; in heart despising what his lip confessed ; striking on account of those manly and noble qualities which only spring from the natural heart of man, he died an unbeliever's death—the death of suicide.

The fact was : all there was admirable in Saul's character, was the result of a fine disposition, not of God's grace ; all there was in Balaam, was the work of the SPIRIT, though miserably crushed ; he possessed nothing striking in a natural sense. Saul may be considered the more admirable, because what there was in him was allowed its full sway—*natural character*. What there was in Balaam admirable was crushed and marred. Which was really the better, it is perhaps hard to say. That Balaam could do much harm there is no doubt.

In themselves, when they stand at God's awful bar, we cannot say which will fare the worst : whether the unbeliever or the very inconsistent believer.

To our natural eye I grant Saul is preferable because he was brave, bold, and generous, cool and intrepid. Balaam, weak, artful, and hypocritical. But as Christians, we have nothing to do with this sort of judgment.

I will make one or two remarks which we may gather from the above, and then I have done.

1st. A character may be admirable, nay, beautiful, without one spark of God's grace, and therefore all its moral excellence be nothing worth ; it may shine in every virtue, amiability, disinterestedness, kindness, generosity, and benevolence. A man may be the most wise of kings, the most kind of fathers, the most generous of friends, but, at heart, an unbeliever and a very infidel as far as God or religion is concerned. Nothing but the mind of CHRIST and the grace of God's Holy Spirit can make a character beautiful in His eyes.

2nd. Another point which strikes us in the above comparison is this :—That inconsistency

in a professing religious man is nearly equally bad with the conduct of the unprofessing and open unbeliever. The man who knows God, who has been religiously educated, convinced of the reality of religion, of the value of the soul, of the necessity of a SAVIOUR, may be like Balaam, thoroughly under a sense of the authority of God, yet with a heart lingering after the world; loving the things of sense, more than those of faith; disobeying the God he professes to fear, offering to make a compromise with Him for the sins he cannot resolve to renounce.

Such are the characters we have placed before us—Saul and Balaam.

Both, characters which we find frequently among those around us. The inconsistent professor, and the consistent and openly sinful.

I may speak to some of each description. If I do, let me solemnly urge on the inconsistent the fearful consequence of such a course. What is it? It is acting against conscience; and what can be so fearful? It is sinning when you know your duty. It is the height of weakness to hope to deceive God, that God Who is never deceived by professing a respect which every action belies. And what

is its fearful consequence? It is hardening the heart; each act makes it harder. It is getting further from God. It is crucifying CHRIST, It is injuring religion. It is destroying thousands. It is procuring yourselves the awful doom of those who "knew their Lord's will and did it not."

Those like Saul—you who have no religion—who profess no religion; remember whom I mean; I do not mean you all who come to church and make an outward show: I do not mean you all who profess to be what is usually called religious persons. Let me remind you nothing will do in the stead of religion. No natural qualities. Do not trust your good nature, or your generosity, or your calmness, or your resignation: all these virtues may be by nature only. Many of these had Saul; but he was not religious, far from it. It is wonderful how soon we may be made to think we are religious, we may have so many natural good qualities that every one may declare we are so, and contrive to make us think so. We may be so steady, so quiet, so devotional, so kind, that we deem ourselves secure. But remember, "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God!"



LXXXI.

Old Testament Contrasts.

JEROBOAM, SAUL, AND AHAB.

SHADES OF SIN.

MALACHI III. 18.

“THEN SHALL YE RETURN, AND DISCERN BETWEEN THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED, BETWEEN HIM THAT SERVETH GOD AND HIM THAT SERVETH HIM NOT.”

1. I WILL consider the case of three wicked persons, whose lives and characters are especially placed before us in Holy Scripture. We may conceive, that no persons have had especial titles given them by God, expressing His favour or displeasure, or their lives accurately described for us more than others, but from its being intended that we should consider those persons' cases more attentively, and as of greater importance.

How much is it the practice in Holy Scripture, to mean much more by expressions than would at first sight appear, and to hide greater truth under words which need close attention. We see how this was the case in typical histories, as in the travelling in the wilderness, the history of Isaac, the sufferings of Joseph. We are struck with this peculiarly in our LORD's Parables.

For example :

(1.) In the parable of the ten talents, we find him, with one talent, hiding it in the earth. Of course the first meaning of this is, that all who have advantages and opportunities, who hide them and neglect them, will have to answer for it. But the very expression and simile has a deeper meaning still. He hid it in the earth, showing us that the lower world,—the objects of sense which are earthy—draw off the soul from God.

(2.) There is the good Samaritan ; the Samaritan being the stranger drawing nearer than the priest, and so showing how the Gentiles would receive the Gospel more obediently than the Jews ; this bears a striking resemblance to the one Samaritan only returning to give glory to God out of the ten lepers : to the great faith

of the Syrophenician woman, and of the Roman centurion, over the Jews who came to Him : to Simon of Cyrene bearing His cross ; and other cases all tending to one great lesson ; that the Gentiles though called last would often be first chosen.

(3.) In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the killing the fatted calf ; and in that of the marriage-feast, the fatlings being killed ; show forth by type the offering of the LAMB of GOD, CHRIST offered for the sacrifice.

(4.) Then also in His miracles ; in the three different states of the three dead He raised ; in the miracle on the blind man, the name of the pool ; and in many others, there is a deep hidden meaning, which we should look for ; and this principle runs through Scripture, making Scripture "one whole."

2. But of the three characters I purposed speaking of. Jeroboam, Saul, and Ahab seem the three persons whose lives are given at great length in Scripture, and to whom especial titles are given, marking them out as especially sinful.

a. Jeroboam is scarcely ever mentioned save as he "who made Israel to sin." Saul's and Ahab's characters are drawn out with an exact

and minute mention of particulars, which is very striking. They seem almost to be instances of different kinds of sinners. Saul, a cold, heartless, careless infidel; Ahab, a sensualist, yet afraid, while he sins; and Jeroboam a man meaning well at first, but becoming inconsistent and leading others into sin. The chief point of his character, that the HOLY SPIRIT has pointed at as peculiarly bad, is his leading others into sin.

GOD's especial anger against Saul and Ahab was shown, by the exact mention of their sins, and the entire extinction of their families; the raising up of prophets to reprove them, such as Samuel and Elijah the great prophets of the Old Testament.

I will examine their cases briefly.

Jeroboam appears first, as rebelling against Solomon, although he was the servant of the "king;" he headed the revolt of the ten tribes of Israel, and at first sight seems to have been exiled for this act; for we are told that Ahijah prophesied that the tribes should be "rent away," and it was on account of this prophecy that "Jeroboam lifted up his hand against the king." And Ahijah had told Jeroboam from God, "I will rend the kingdom out of the hand

of Solomon, and will give it unto thee." Where then was his sin? His sin was in taking by force what God promised, and not waiting patiently. It was like the children of Israel not waiting for a king, but insisting on having one at once. How different to David. He was told he should have Saul's kingdom; but he never lifted an arm towards taking it, though he had every excuse from Saul's persecutions. He spared his life at Engedi. He even killed the man who said that he had slain Saul in battle. He waited patiently God's time, without staining his hand with the blood of rebellion. Abraham was promised Canaan, yet he took it not. He could have done it as easily as he smote Chedorlaomer and rescued Lot. Yet he did not, but wandered in the land as a stranger and pilgrim, waiting for the promise. So David became father of a line of kings; Jeroboam's race became extinct.

By sin he came to the throne; and now, how did he act? It is not wonderful, after this beginning, that he went on badly. When a man begins to do wrong, he cannot answer for himself how far he may be carried on. He does not see beforehand; he cannot know where he shall find himself after the sin is

committed. One false step forces him to another, for he cannot draw back. It was a trial to Jeroboam, we do not doubt; but he was tried and found wanting. He came to the throne. The Jewish nation was not only a kingdom but a church too; and Jeroboam having set up a new kingdom, must set up a new religion. Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship. But then that was the capital of Judah; and Jeroboam must set up a new place of worship. He could not build a temple like Solomon's; yet he wanted some suitable sign of God's presence, and he made an image of God for the people to worship, which God had forbidden. This was his second step. One step led to the other. Sin is a hard master. It is hard to draw back. He set up a calf in Dan and Bethel: and said, "Behold thy gods, O Israel!" He excused himself, doubtless, by saying he was only putting up an image like the cherubim, but of a different shape. But he was an idolater, and made Israel to sin. Matters went on worse and worse. He had made priests of the lowest of the people; leaving the appointed line of Levi. He changed the solemn feast-days: so that the Levites and priests left him. This was

a sad beginning: it drew the righteous away. What good could he now expect? All the holy were gone. Then came the old Prophet from Bethel, who as if the land and the king were infected with pestilence, addressed the altar, not Jeroboam. "Oh! altar, altar." The king himself venturing to offer sacrifice, was now cut off from God's favour and intercourse. Then the hand was withered; the old Prophet returned, and was killed. The lion stood by, not tearing him:—showing, if God so punished His own people, how would He punish the wicked! For "if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?"

Jeroboam returned not from his evil ways. He lost at last even all his earthly prosperity, and the LORD struck him and he died. And what is his sad never-forgotten memorial? "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Such was Jeroboam, the man whose miserable character is known to all; and God stamped him with a mark above most wicked men. And why? He interfered in the right religion of a nation, and made others sin. Few dared do this. Saul but once offered sacrifice himself, and then excused himself, and

was sorry ; Ahab trembled before God. Yet Jeroboam went on from bad to worse, and scarce knew whither he was going. He never meant so much harm at first. The sin then, which from his case we find especially denounced, is that of leading others into error in matters of religion, when the truth is already clear to the person himself.

b. Before I go further into the lesson of his conduct, I will turn again for a moment to Saul, who seems especially dwelt upon as sinful. Saul was a man whose character would naturally be admired by the world. Pride, obstinacy, reserve, jealousy, courage, are all qualities suited to a great eastern king. There was a striking independence about him, and highmindedness. The first mention of his greatness came on him suddenly. It did not unsettle him. He kept it secret. He said to his uncle ; “ ‘ He told me plainly of the asses ;’ but of the matter of the kingdom, he told him not.” Then again, he hid himself when they made him king. Then the children of Belial despised him, and brought him no gifts ; but “ he held his peace.” Then, in the midst of his greatness, Saul came after the herd out of the field. But still there must have been some great fault about him, when we

find so awful a remark as this, "God gave thee a king in His anger."

He had "no fear of God!" Others were inconsistent, as Eli and Samson. Some suddenly fell as David; some were corrupted by prosperity as Solomon. But as to Saul he seems to have had no deep-seated belief at all. He was a very type of unbelief. A cold, unfeeling man, making religion useful to his earthly ends, that was all. This is shown throughout his history. When he sought his asses, though Samuel was the oldest and most revered of prophets, Saul looked upon him as a mere diviner, and offered him a small piece of money to show him the way. "Then God gave him another heart, and he prophesied." And it became a proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"—showing how great the contrast was: how cold and useless he must have been before. He forced himself to offer sacrifice, which only the priests should. He carried the ark about with him irreverently; and when a tumult was heard among the Philistines, he put the ark carelessly aside, and went to the battle. He was sent against Amalek, and fearing the people and obeying their voice he spared Agag, and the best of the

flocks and herds. He killed all the priests with the edge of the sword, and destroyed Nob their city. He calls up Samuel from the dead as a mere diviner. Then he killed himself. Unbelief and wilfulness are the marks of his character. Cold, unfeeling towards God, he made religion a mere tool, and looked at the people of Israel, as like the other nations around him, and not as God's peculiar people, His chosen children of old. There is no character just like his in Scripture, so deep and calculating, so cold and bad in principle, yet not profligate.

c. Ahab was sensual, cowardly, weak, hated, too gross to be dangerous, and too cowardly to shake off God altogether. He did not dare be an infidel ; but became an idolater. Jeroboam scarce knew what he was doing, though in the end his sin became worse than Saul's, because it so misled others. Saul's was more individual, belonging to himself. He knew well what he was about ; he acted coldly on principle. He had what men would call some natural virtue ; but natural virtue dwindles away, if not settled into principle.

The first mention of him marks him as peculiarly bad. "And Ahab, son of Omri,

did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him." He "thought it a light thing to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat." Yet he was not a cold infidel; for we find the most righteous man of his day was "governor of his house,"—Obadiah—and him he consulted on that occasion when Elijah met Ahab, and said, "Send and gather all the prophets of Baal." And Ahab did so. Here was his fear of the truth, and the word of the true God. And Ahab mentioned the slaughter of the prophets of Baal to Jezebel; and Jezebel threatened Elijah's life, not Ahab. Coveting Naboth's vineyard, he had not courage to take it by force, but killed him by false witness on the suggestion of Jezebel; and having done it he met Elijah with fear, and humbled himself after his sin. Then are mentioned his acts about Ramoth Gilead, and his treatment of Michaiah. "There was none like Ahab, who did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up."

The principal feature of his sin was this: he was weak and sensual, yet well knew what was right, and had a conscience not yet dead. He allowed himself to be stirred up by others,

and seems to have thought that that was a mark of excellence. Yet he went on to the last, crushing his conscience, and died in rebellion. We are led to think that he was one of the most wicked of men.

Ahab's sin was, acting against conscience.

Saul's, coldness and unbelief.

Jeroboam's was, leading others into sin.

We may all of us be guilty of these sins ; chiefly we may of Jeroboam's, and for this we shall be most severely punished. Remark, though Jeroboam was not at first aware how bad he would be—perhaps not as much as Saul—he became worse than all, and his character most marked. We may be incurring God's anger more than others without knowing it. JESUS said, "Whoever shall offend one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the sea." How many, very many, may be doing this, leading others into sin. You may be doing it, not knowing right yourself, and not trying to know right, so misleading others, by an ignorance you will have to answer for. You may be doing it by smiling at, and by excusing the sin of others, so guiding them into harm,

and settling them in sin, which you will have to answer for. You may be doing it by your own evil conduct, making others think lightly of sin, your children, your family, men younger than yourself; or you may still more, like Jeroboam, be leading them into religious error by holding back from religious ordinances, and teaching others so; and separating from CHRIST'S Church, by placing anything in the stead of public worship, and by despising God's holy Temple, and the services of His ministry.

See to it, lest it be said of you, when you are at the judgment, that you made others to sin. Or see, that, like Saul, you are not indulging the cold, heartless unbelief of God; despising warm, devoted spirituality in others, and explaining away by natural causes only the works of God's Holy Spirit.

Or like Ahab, sinning on against conscience, trembling, yet sinning; like him, you may die in an open sin against the voice of conscience, and you are lost. Many of you may be acting like this, intending to leave off error, and yet clinging to it; hoping some day to leave it off, and excusing yourself by the fact of being advised by others.

Saul perhaps most acted on principle. The

faults of the other two are often fallen into by those who mean well. Dwell on these things, and pray, for the judgment is at hand. Time is short, and these things "are written for our admonition."

LXXXII.

Old Testament Contrasts and Parallels.

FAITH AND FEELING.

ISA. XLI. 8.

**"BUT THOU, ISRAEL, ART MY SERVANT, JACOB WHOM
I HAVE CHOSEN, THE SEED OF ABRAHAM MY
FRIEND."**

I. THERE is in Scripture a hidden truth which we gradually become acquainted with, and which we may not thoroughly know for years. Truth which has been by degrees revealing itself, by the aid of the Spirit, so that, perhaps, what at first sight seems to have scarce any meaning at all, at last appears to be clothed with an importance, which we could not have before conceived. And surely remarks we find scattered here and there, through the Word of God, have a holy meaning, which it is our duty to discern.

The fact of their being at first obscure is no sign that they are not the casket of a jewel, whose value is priceless. Their obscurity is no sign that they are not needful for us to know here; their very obscurity is meant for our probation and moral discipline. We are not told many things in Scripture, which we still know to be true, and should value as truths; and we feel sure we were meant to value them. We are not told that the whole history of the Jews in their journey from Egypt to Canaan, was an exact picture of the Christian life, yet it was so, and we feel that we are meant to look at it as so; a slight clue is given for our guidance; Moses said, "A prophet shall the LORD your God raise up unto you of your brethren. Him shall ye hear in all things." Again; we are not told that there is a sanctity in the numbers three and seven. But we feel there must be. We are not told that the intended sacrifice of Isaac was a type of that of CHRIST, but it was. Nor that the history of CHRIST's sufferings was to be a likeness of the fall of Adam in its smaller particulars, such as the drops of Agony falling on the ground, which Adam tilled with sweat; the crown of thorns removed ere He was buried

in the garden, which from Adam should bring forth thorns, so removing the curse. While we see these things we take comfort from them, and feel certain they were written for our good.

Surely there is a great hidden meaning in many other things which we perhaps have seldom considered. It was the way of speaking of old ; hiding great truths at first ; such were our LORD's parables ; the old prophecies ; the Old Testament history ; and such we find the custom among all men ; all proverbs are part of the same system of hiding great truths at first.

God has attached certain names and titles to men in the Bible, which seem to have some great hidden meaning, as showing what character God approves.

There are certain men to whose characters He has attached a distinct approval which is most striking.

Abraham is called "the friend of God."

David, "the man after God's own heart."

S. John, "the beloved disciple."

There is some deep meaning in each of these titles not to be passed by casually. Again :

Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

False prophets speaking peace where there is no peace.

The peculiarly strong way in which Saul and Ahab are spoken of as trifling in sinfulness.

I will look into the cause and see what were the features in the character of the first three to whom such especial names are given.

1. Abraham is called the friend of God, thus, "Art Thou not our God who gavest this land to the seed of Abraham Thy friend for ever?"

"But thou, Israel, art the seed of Abraham My friend."

And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, "Abraham believed God; and he was called the friend of God." Again God says, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do?" Such words must have some deep hidden meaning.

2. Again: speaking of David, "The LORD hath sought a man after His own heart." "He raised up David to whom He gave this testimony: I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after Mine own heart, who shall fulfil all My will." Again: "He found favour before God and built Him a temple."

3. And of S. John: "Now there was leaning on JESU'S bosom, one of His disciples whom

JESUS loved.” Such a remark as this must be intended to have great weight. The HOLY SPIRIT would not have mentioned this had there not been a power and reality in the love which JESUS felt towards him, which we ought to be struck with. Again: “She runneth to Simon Peter and the other disciple whom JESUS loved.” Or, “Therefore the disciple whom JESUS loved saith to Peter;” and “Peter turning about saw the disciple whom JESUS loved following, which leaned on His breast at supper.” These things would not be mentioned unless some more than usual lesson were intended to be conveyed. No word of God is written in vain. There must have been some underlying reason why the HOLY SPIRIT should single out from the eleven, one, as the one whom He loved, and so often repeat the fact of His being thus beloved. No characters seem so distinguished as these three by titles implying God’s favour. Why had they it? What is the distinguishing feature of their character and conduct? How did they differ from other holy men? and how in these respects did they agree with each other?

II. The characters of Holy Scripture are so various that we are impressed with the view

that the Old Testament is a volume of character, written to show the application of religious privileges to the varieties of men. In Abraham ; earthly power was taught its dependence upon God for support. In Jacob ; strong affection and warmth of feeling were schooled. In Joseph ; vanity was crushed by being removed from its sphere ; true greatness only found after bitter sorrow and working out God's ends. In Moses ; arrogance humbled. In Samuel ; firmness was produced by living apart from human ties. In David ; selfishness was pardoned here though needing deep penitence. In Solomon ; the fall of the wisest is shown through the most foolish of sins. In Elijah ; ambition is checked by his being called to active life, yet translated. Job though the best of men erred on the side of the chief virtue, for he was impatient. In Jonah we are reminded that self-importance will strive to make God's works subservient to itself.

Such being the seeming object of the Scripture characters let us look at Abraham. What is our first feeling in thinking of him ? that is, in what did his character seem peculiar ? In Faith and unworldliness. In what David's ? A tender love of God. In what S. John's ?

Love. Now how do they assimilate essentially with each other? Who else was especially faithful? Not so strikingly, Jacob, or Isaac, or Solomon. Abraham's faithfulness bore the great fruit of faithfulness, unworldliness. Samuel, Elijah, and Ezekiel, were characters who seemed especially to have lived by faith, to have lived free of the world. How did Abraham differ from them? In having a tender disposition, a deeper well-spring of human feeling. No relation is mentioned in connection with Samuel or Elijah, save in Samuel's younger years, and after that the mention of them passed away. Nor had he any of those tender feelings which such relationship would induce. There was a sternness about his character which is peculiar. His sons are mentioned; but not in any such connection with himself so as to lead us to imagine that he lived much with them, or that they were an engrossing interest to him in life.

With Abraham it was different. He was a man of much strong and domestic affection, really attached to earthly ties, and mentioned in close connection with them throughout his history. First leaving his father's home and becoming a sojourner in a new land. Then his son is mentioned as an especial object of his care.

Then the frequent mention of his wife Sarah. In fact, we cannot take a general view of Abraham's life without having it impressed upon us that he was a man bound up in his family, and strikingly different to either Elijah or Samuel. The very mention of the death of Sarah is arresting: "And Sarah died, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. And Abraham stood up from before his dead."

Again. In the case of Hagar and Ishmael: "The thing was grievous in the sight of Abraham because of his son; and Abraham rose up early in the morning and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child."

His great concern for the people of Sodom; and his first departure from Canaan, "when Abraham went up, he and his wife." And at the first call of Abraham, "The LORD said, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."

Yet with all this, who so faithful as he? that is, who so living by faith, freeing himself from the ties of this life and living for another; full

of love to man, yet full of love to God ; living in the world, yet not abusing it !

I would meet a possible objection here. It may be said, how can we draw these conclusions with regard to characters in the Bible, when they are founded on certain features not mentioned in their characters ? How can we say Samuel and Elijah were not characters like Abraham in these respects, since Scripture does not profess to give us the whole of any man's character ; may we fairly draw an argument from characters given in this way ? But we find the writers of the New Testament do draw similar deductions with regard to the characters of the Old from equally slight grounds. Such then was Abraham in comparison with other characters, who were men remarkable for faith and unworldliness ; from which fact we gather this truth. That the man who being naturally—from objects around him—of a kind, tender, affectionate disposition, yet gives all these up, for God's sake, and bears cheerfully and tranquilly their loss, is a higher character in God's eyes, than the man who, from natural disposition and circumstances, has never had these feelings called forth, and

will stand highest in heaven I do not pretend to say, and what place in God's church, here and hereafter, their different characters may occupy I cannot say. But those, whom God has most honoured with expressions of favour on earth, have been men of this kind. Such titles have not been given to Samuel, Elijah, John Baptist; and their not being mentioned in the Bible is sufficient for us to imagine they were not given. These men seem to have passed through a life of secluded solitary greatness, repressing sin, and by their nature and education suited for the stern mission of preaching repentance; they appear to have worked in their day a greater good, publicly and nationally, than such as Abraham, David, and the like,—and that they pass to glory in no common degree in favour with God we cannot doubt, as such words as these would lead us to know, “They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.”

Before I say more, I refer again to David and S. John. They evidently agreed with Abraham in the particulars I have mentioned; tenderness, love for earthly objects, yet devotion to God.

We need but to read such passages as these in David's life, to be convinced of this. I refer to his feelings to Jonathan his friend, and Absalom his son. When Jonathan died, "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been to me, thy love to me was wonderful." And again, "Oh Absalom, my son, would I had died for thee! O Absalom, my son, my son!" Yet his faithfulness, his trust in God, his unworldliness, are sufficiently shown in the Scripture.

S. John is ever connected, in a child's mind, with tenderness and affection—"the disciple whom Jesus loved:" his whole epistle breathing the spirit of "love:" his affectionate feelings leading him, last at the cross, to watch first at the sepulchre to see Him; love outrunning zeal; the blessed Virgin being committed to his care: his being selected as the Apostle to receive the revelations of God: and his faith, all bear to the same point. I say nothing here of that peculiar severity, which nevertheless marks his writings.

The three characters, then, which are thus distinguished by especial names of God's favour, all agree in this respect, a deep and tender love in their dispositions; yet prevented from

so ruling them, as to draw off their faith from God, which faith was shown by a life of freedom from the world. Faith is the one feature on which especially to dwell in character as being the highest, and therefore I have compared Abraham with those who most shine in these particulars, Samuel and Elijah ; as my object was to discover, among other remarkably faithful characters, men not so especially marked by a name by God as Abraham. And it is worthy of remark that others who have especial mention of God's favour, were not men of the same sternness as Samuel and Elijah ; such, for example, as Moses and Job, who more frequently than any other persons in the Bible are called the servants of God ; and " My servant."

III. Let this then be the lesson and comfort we draw, that however little we may be living a life of public usefulness, yet a retired one may be the life God has placed us in. However dear around our heart the tender affectionate ties of this world's relations may be bound, yet, if in spite of them, we live for God, and are devoting our heart to Him ; holding such blessings as lent, not given ; we may be more especially objects of His watchful con-

stant care, and may be treading the same path as the friend of God, and the disciple whom JESUS loved. Such precedents teach us to value warm affectionate feeling, which a cold, unfeeling world despises. They teach us to condemn the doctrine of the world, which would root up affectionate feelings in those we are living with, and remind us of the love of JESUS for His blessed Mother, and His tears at the grave of Lazarus.

There are many characters in God's church, each filling a needful place in the Catholic body; and the needful place is determined by God, not man.

God has especially stamped with His favour those who are found amid the retired unmentioned scenes of life, and are moulded in those of domestic life. It is not always public men and active men who are objects of His especial favour; suffering life may be more loved by Him than the active one.

The object which God has given us, to which to draw out our affections, tender feeling, and sympathy, may be the very opportunity of our special devotion to Him.

Deep feelings must be subdued and kept under. We must expect to have all the ob-

jects of them removed, if God sees fit. Abraham lost Sarah, must cast out Ishmael, and was told to sacrifice Isaac. David lost Jonathan and Absalom. S. John saw Jesus die. The altar, the cross, the warfare of life, must see us willing to resign what we love, while we love it best. God would make His gifts chains to Himself. We may not bend like Jacob, but bear like Abraham.

I am not now speaking of characters such as Samuel and Elijah. Of course they were most holy, most favoured, and perhaps most glorified. But let us encourage—oh, how much—the unobtrusive, the affectionate, the quiet, the faithful, the deeply loving. Strong affection is not inconsistent with religion; far from it. God especially loves it when in submission to Him; for of such were and are the “Friends of God,” the “Disciples whom Jesus loves.”

